

LETTERS OF

James McHenry

To

Governor Thomas Sim Lee

1781

THIS EDITION IS LIMITED
TO ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY COPIES
OF WHICH THIS IS NUMBER 143

Sarah Redwood Lee

Wm. Taverner Sunday morning

Sir

Although the accounts
your Excellency received last night
are not precise or final, yet it is
possible they may render some al-
terations in General Washington's in-
structions to the Marquis necessary.
If the objects of the expedition were
fixed and pointed out the Marquis
may be imbarassed to proceed beyond
these. I beg leave therefore to suggest
to your Excellency the propriety of
transmitting in your private capacity
the intelligence to General Washington
by express that he may have it in
his power to accommodate his orders to
the worst of events.

I would have waited on your
Excellency were I not confined to my
chamber with a slight fever.
With the greatest respect I
leave the honor to be upon your Excellency most
affectionately
James M. Henry



A Sidelight on History

BEING THE LETTERS OF

James McHenry

AIDE-DE-CAMP OF THE MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE

to

Thomas Sim Lee

GOVERNOR OF MARYLAND

WRITTEN DURING THE YORKTOWN CAMPAIGN

1781



PRIVATELY PRINTED 1931

INTRODUCTION

1778 is usually spoken of as the darkest period of the American Revolution. In reality 1780 witnessed a depression that probably went deeper and was more wide-spread than at any other time during the war. The energies of America were more nearly spent; commerce was non-existent, credit was gone, disaster had followed the French fleet from Savannah to Charleston. In proportion as the patriot cause seemed to languish, Tory activities redoubled themselves and a spirit of lassitude spread itself over the masses of the people. The correspondence of Washington at this period shows that he felt the cause to be hopeless unless France could be persuaded to increase her financial, military, and naval aid, especially the last, so as to wrest from England the control of the sea. Additional aid from France arrived in time to save the situation, since weariness was the chief cause of the depression, a condition easily relieved as soon as hope entered in.

Maryland was the strategic point of the campaign of 1780, connecting as it did the North with the South. Fortunately for Washington and the Continental cause, Maryland possessed at this critical juncture a Chief Executive whose patriotism never flagged and whose energies seemed inexhaustible: Thomas Sim Lee, elected to the post the previous year.

Governor Lee was descended from Colonel Richard

Lee, who came over to Virginia from England in 1641, founding a family that was distinguished for its patriotism. His grandson, Philip, left Virginia in 1700, settling in Lord Baltimore's province in Maryland, where his son, Thomas, married Christiana Sim. It is to their only son, Thomas Sim Lee, (early left an orphan by the death of his parents) that the letters of this collection are addressed.

In 1771 the future Governor of Maryland married Mary Digges, daughter of the wealthy land owner, Ignatius Digges of Melwood. The young couple settled upon an estate known as Needwood, in Frederick County, where they thought of nothing but cultivating their broad acres and leading the cultured, agreeable life, given to large hospitality, of the landed gentry of the time. At the first alarm of war, Mr. Lee, like the other landed proprietors of Maryland, immediately sided with the patriot cause, risking the loss of their vast fortunes should defeat overtake them.

When elected Governor for the first time, Mr. Lee was thirty-four years old. Up to that time he had taken no active part in public affairs; none the less, from the first moment of his acceptance, he distinguished himself by the vigorous support he gave to every necessary measure of defense and by the energy and effectiveness with which he collected and dispatched provisions and clothing to the needy Continental Army. Repeatedly he received the thanks of the Commander-in-Chief for these timely aids. After the disaster of Savannah, in response to Washington's re-

quest for regular troops to replace those taken prisoners, and those who had deserted, Governor Lee exerted himself to the utmost in raising men for the army, whom he pledged to remain with it to the end, by giving to each recruit fifty acres of land. He was thus able to add 2065 men to Washington's army.

In all his patriotic endeavors Governor Lee was ably assisted by his wife. On one occasion when Washington had written asking for shirts and black socks for his men, Mary Lee immediately began enlisting the women of the State, who with their own hands prepared the requisite garments.

In the Spring of 1781 Lafayette appeared in Baltimore with troops which he had been ordered to command in the Virginia campaign of that year. Governor Lee at once commandeered all the vessels of the State so that the Marquis might promptly reach his destination at Williamsburg. It is precisely at this point that the letters of this collection take up the story, for the writer of the letters, Dr. James McHenry, had been appointed aide-de-camp to Lafayette for this same expedition. A personal friend of Governor Lee and of his wife, the letters by their tone reflect the generosity and whole-hearted sincerity of the Maryland Executive. Their chief interest, however, will be found to lie in the insight which they give to the military situation, by adding to our intimate knowledge of the Virginia campaign, already made so vivid by the recent appearance of the Lafayette letters, forming Cahier II of the Institut-Français de Washington publications. At the same

time they connect, even more closely than the letters of Lafayette, the Virginia campaign with the final victory at Yorktown.

James McHenry had come to America with his father and a younger brother about 1771, from a town near Belfast in Ireland. They belonged to Scotch-Irish Presbyterian stock, the father being a well-to-do merchant who soon established himself in Baltimore, where he amassed, as time went on, a considerable fortune. James seems to have studied for a time at Newark in Delaware, at what has since become the University of that State. Later he went to Philadelphia and studied medicine under Dr. Benjamin Rush. In 1775 the young man followed Washington to Cambridge where he tendered his services for the care of the sick and wounded of the army. Later he was named surgeon of the Fifth Pennsylvania Regiment then stationed at Fort Mifflin. When the fort was taken by General Howe, Dr. McHenry was made prisoner along with 2000 American soldiers. As prisoner he was allowed to continue his ministrations to the sick among his companions.

He was paroled in 1777 and finally released. A year later Dr. Rush addressed him as "Surgeon of the Flying Hospital at Valley Forge." On May 15th of that year he was appointed secretary to General Washington. Before accepting the office it was necessary that he become an American citizen. To this end he consulted his father and received permission to abjure his allegiance to the King and to take the oath of loyalty

to America. He remained part of the military family of the Commander-in-Chief until his appointment to the post of aide to Lafayette in the Spring of 1781, when these letters begin.

During this time McHenry had served his adopted country at his own expense, without any recognition of his services having been made by Congress. A belated move to mend matters was made by that body in March 1781, and was left in suspense until August. About that time McHenry received notification that he was to be given the rank of Major and that it was to be considered as operative from the previous October. It will be seen in his letters to Governor Lee that the action of Congress was not very gratefully received; in fact he seems to have been unwilling to take any notice of so tardy an action. Later he proposed resignation of the honor. He must have been over-ruled in this design for he retained the rank of Major in the Continental Army after he left the service to take up the duties of Senator in the Maryland Legislature. He was afterwards appointed by Washington Secretary of War, being the third to receive that honor.

Elizabeth S. Kite.

FOREWORD

The following unpublished letters, written to Thomas Sim Lee, Governor of Maryland, during the Revolution, were recently discovered by a descendant in an old chest of family papers.

In view of the hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the capitulation of Yorktown and the successful outcome of the Revolution, to be celebrated in October, 1931, these letters, giving, as they do, a graphic account of the Yorktown Campaign, will not be without interest.

Had the British forces, instead of the American, been successful at Yorktown, they would undoubtedly have marched against Maryland. It was therefore necessary for Governor Lee to be kept informed of the progress of the siege, in order to make the proper defense in his State.

There were also, according to a letter from his son, Honorable John Lee, to Mr. Sparks, the historian, a series of letters sent almost daily from General Washington to Governor Lee from Yorktown, with the same object of insuring the defenses of Maryland. These letters from General Washington have disappeared and have not yet been traced. They may be among the large number of Washington letters in the Sparks Collection at Harvard, or in some other private collection. At all events the present letters with their

vivid, and often human touch, are full of interest, particularly for those who are attracted to the bypaths of the final drama of the American Revolution.

Sarah Redwood Lee.

Washington,
September, 1931.

LETTERS OF JAMES McHENRY

Baltimore, 13th April, 1781.

You do not seem, my dear Sir, to be aware of an error you have run into, and I am too much in your interest not to tell you of it, though ardently at the hazard of a very distinguishing satisfaction. Would any Governor but a true Republican one, have entered into a correspondence with his subject, levelling as you have done the barriers of station and office? If you observe this conduct to men who know how to estimate its value, you will never, I can assure you, rise to a royal province should the English make us their slaves. Besides, who knows but you may become dangerous to the State by becoming too popular; while at the same time, you must submit to all the inconvenience of having friends instead of flatterers.—Having now told you truth and discharged my duty to the republic, let me tell you some conjectures.

If the manœuvres of the British do not perplex themselves, they, at least, are to us of difficult explanation. I suppose two motions to have produced Phillips' detachment. The disagreeable situation in which Cornwallis found himself seemed to require assistance. This the Hessian recruits lately arrived at Charlestown from Europe, could not afford. Arnold also wanted reinforcement. His lines were too extensive for his numbers; and he must either be much distressed or have his numbers increased. The detachment under the Marquiss, whether Clinton thought it designed

against Arnold or Cornwallis, equally called for a counter-poise. Let us rest upon these principles and further suppose that Cornwallis intended a junction of forces with Arnold, but was stopped by intelligence of the French look-out ships from Rhode Island having arrived in Chesapeake; (the junction was then no longer proper), and finally thrown back to where he now is by the battle of Guilford. He is now at too great a distance from Phillips for the latter to attempt joining him, on the first proposed line or through Virginia. Upon this we may explain Phillips' not landing. Something would seem to have deranged his plan by his standing still, and perhaps it is this. He may also be waiting accounts of the Marquiss's movements, by which to regulate his. If this reasoning is good, we need not be much alarmed either for Annapolis or Baltimore, for it would be a military kind of solecism were Phillips, instead of succoring Cornwallis, to bend his arms against either place. What we have most to fear, then, and what we should guard against, is such parties of marauders as are displayed before Alexandria. Perhaps you will be able to do this with galleys and militia. It will be well could a substitute be discovered for the latter—but this can only be accepted from the Assembly. That policy which exempts the militia of any State from service except in extraordinary cases, however expensive, will be a wise one.

Would it not be well for government to order this place to be cleared of the great quantity of

flour which is in it? There is enough, I am told, to draw on the enemy.

The Marquiss, I hear, marched yesterday.

With the utmost regard and esteem, I have the honor to be very respectfully, dear Sir, your Excellency's

Most obst.

James McHenry.

Will you oblige me in one thing and call me "Mr." instead of "Major?" I do not hold a commission in the army, neither do I intend to hold one. I am, and have been for some time past, only a volunteer.

His Excellency,
Governor Lee.

Baltimore, the 27th Apr. 1781.

Dear Sir:

I have been (imposing silence upon myself for some weeks) in order to prevent you from being troubled. I had two objects in view, the one to encourage the good people of this place to do something effectual for sea-defense, and the other to prevent solicitations to government for assistance. My policy, however, has fallen

short of its intentions. The first was a matter of no difficulty, but all that could be done in the latter was to direct it into such a channel as to give you the least embarrassment. We are now so far gone in the galley that she may be completed with a little foreign help. Finding it then impossible to keep clear of an application, it only remained to adopt one, the least exceptionable; one, that while it might satisfy the people, would not materially obstruct the arrangements of government, or attempt money already appropriated. I did not therefore do everything possible to discourage the application, which is conveyed to you by General Buchanan; although you may be assured I have, both in public and private, (undertaken to prevent) every other that must have fallen upon the treasury. Well aware of this being too far exhausted to afford much relief, I endeavored to preserve administration from the necessity of refusing what might have appeared reasonable, and, of course, to avert a great deal of censure and ill humor, which never fails to show itself on such occasions.

I will not pretend to anticipate what the Council will do in this case. The laws, I believe, do not oppose the present application. If it is not granted, the people may perhaps consider themselves neglected. If it is granted, it will be purchasing a general good at a small expense, and at the same time gratifying a respectable part of the community. In fine, my dear Sir, as the Council do not offend against the laws in giving up the

militia fines (under certain restrictions) as a fund for the equipment of the galley; and as these are too inconsiderable to answer any other purpose of equal magnitude to the State, I cannot, therefore, help thinking that it would be proper enough to apply them in this manner. I would only add one or two remarks. If after this the Town failed in their attempt, the work they had done would, as it were, of course become the property of government. On the other hand, should it enable them to succeed, their grant could not be considered as an evil precedent, for, should other parts of the State pray for a similar indulgence, it would be policy to grant it upon condition that they would fit out a galley and use it for the use of the commonwealth at large. But notwithstanding all this, I am more than half of opinion that Council will find reason for rejecting the propopsal.

A propos, let us not be over-sure of the Dutch War that Col. Howe has declared. It may be, however, as he has it; at any rate, I think it will be; and yet I wish to see a proper confirmation. Some of the bills sent to the country, your Excellency speaks of, have been accepted, but whether they will be paid is an affair of events. The men on whom they are drawn are very ignorant of the drawers, neither do they seem to have a right comprehension of our genius and resources; our deputy in this quarter is also ill informed of either the good or bad changes in our circumstances, while Cumberland, the English negotiater, is regularly

furnished with documents from his court magnifying all our misfortunes. An alliance does not seem very near. Pretexts have been raised that would appear to make delay expedient, and difficulties proposed that may, to say no more, procrastinate the payment of our bills. But all these will dissipate in proportion as we are successful.

With the most perfect regard and esteem, I have the honor to, very respectfully, dear Sir,

Your Excellency's obst.

James McHenry.

Superscribed as follows:

Post my Officer—James Hendricks.

July 29, 1/2 past one P. M.

His Excellency Governor Lee,
State of Maryland,
Annapolis.

The express is to ride night and day.

James McHenry,
Aide-de-Camp.
Major Gen. Marquiss de La Fayette.

Baltimore, 10th May, 1781.

Dear Sir:

I had a letter yesterday from his Excellency the General, dated 20th inst., in which he says "that for some time past reports have been prevalent that another embarkation was taking place at New York, upon a pretty extensive scale, and that Sir Henry Clinton was to command in person; but the facts are not yet well ascertained."

We have accounts from Philadelphia by the post of the same nature, and that the transports with the troops were following down to the Hook.

Delaware is spoke of. Were I to hazard an opinion, it would be, that mediately or immediately, the Southern States are the object. There are even reasons for believing that the cabinet of Great Britain prefers conquest and possession in this quarter to the holding of New York. Indeed, a stable occupancy appears essential to her carrying on the war. The confederation of the neutral powers may effectually seclude her from naval stores; and this will oblige her to take care of the only quarter from whence these can be drawn. How far we may be affected by this is not difficult to imagine.

With the utmost respect and attachment, I have the honor to be, dear Sir,

Your Excellency's obst.

James McHenry.

Some time since, I asked the Council to promise payment and liquidation of my pay, on the idea that I was in the same predicament with other gentlemen to whom this had been granted. I asked also that if I did not receive my certificates in time for want of proper vouchers to settle my acct. and should purchase any of the confiscated property, that I should not be hurried for payment. I did not know when I wrote this letter, that the offer of certificates in the payment of these estates had been refused, or I should not have said any thing on the subject. Pray, am I to get any answer on the first question? Perhaps it is of the same nature with the last. I am not very punctilious; and yet I believe I am not without a little.

Bal. 9 June 1781.

My dear Sir:

When I have joined the Southern army (for which purpose I set out in less than two hours) I hope you will not forget that there is in it, one, who has the most sincere esteem for your Excellency. I know not any thing I have done to deserve the attentions you have shown me; but if I did not regard good men, I should

cease to respect myself. This must always insure you my warmest attachment.

I cannot at this moment say whether I shall make the campaign with the Marquiss or Gen. Greene. It is most likely, however, that it will be with the latter, as he has written to General Washington and to myself very pressingly on this head. He will also, I suppose, have the most difficulties to encounter; and if so, this will determine me.

Let me beg your Excellency to present my compliments of leave to Mrs. Lee; and to believe me, yours sincerely and with the greatest regard and attachment,

James McHenry.

His Excellency,
Governor Lee.

Headquarters, Col. Dandridges House,
23 Miles from Richmond.
19 June 1781.

Dear Sir:

I am not sure that the Marquiss writes you, and therefore I do. When the Marquiss was obliged to move, Cornwallis took a position at Cook's fork, which enabled him either to return to James river or to gain

our northern communication. To prevent him from destroying the stores arriving from Philadelphia was a necessary attempt on the part of the Marquiss. The Baron, with about 500 Virginia levies and some militia, covered the stores at the fork of the James river.

Tarleton's legion penetrated to Charlotteville, dissipated the Assembly, and destroyed about 150 stand of arms and some powder. Simcoe, with his corps, proceeded to the point of fork and destroyed the stores which the Baron deserted. In the meantime, Cornwallis approached the point of fork with intention to strike our magazines at Albemarle Old Court House. But before he could reach them the Marquiss effected his junction with the Pennsylvanians, and by opening a march through a road deemed impassible, gained a position on Michunk Creek between the enemy and our magazines, where he was joined by some riflemen. The day following, Cornwallis retired towards Richmond, where he now is. We are in this neighborhood. In this war of marches, the Marquiss is the victor, because he obliged by a very happy manœuvre his Lordship to return without completing his principal object. Commodore Banon writes that on the 17th, in the afternoon, 35 sail of the enemy's vessels anchored in Hampton Road from sea. He supposes them the same that sailed

from thence thirteen days ago. Four, he says, appeared to have troops on board.

With the greatest respect and attachment, I have the honor to be, dear Sir, your Excellency's

Most obst.

James McHenry.

His Excellency,
Governor Lee.

Headquarters, 7th July, 1781.

I have spoken only, my dear Sir, what I think. If I had thought differently you would have had politeness, but no confidence. Indeed, I feel myself both honored and happy in your goodness and regards. But we will not speak again of this subject, unless we begin to mistrust each other.

Yesterday an advance party of our army, consisting of about 700 regulars and some riflemen, fell in with the enemy's main body between Green Spring and Jamestown. A loose firing was commenced by the riflemen about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, and continued till within half an hour of sunset, when our regulars and the enemy engaged in a very close and sharp con-

test, that was ended soon by the coming on of night. We were obliged to give way several times, being opposed by the whole force of Cornwallis, but we did it in such order as gives much credit to the enemy's prudence, considering their vast superiority. We formed the last time at the back of the Green spring, one mile from the field of action, and about three from James Town, but Lord Cornwallis declined renewing the attack. After waiting here to cover the retreat of our wounded and stragglers, we retreated to Nowel Mill. During the course of the action we brought forward troops to our support, but we had no use for them.

Our loss is not considerable in killed, almost none in prisoners, but greatest in wounded. Two light pieces of artillery fell into the enemy's hands, which could not be extricated from the woods, where they got entangled. But this is nothing; or is always made of more consequence than it deserves. Many advantages have been lost for the sake of preserving one or two pieces of cannon, which in themselves are of inconsiderable value.

This move toward the enemy became essential, to observe their motions, to penetrate their designs and for forestalling any favorable moments that might offer in their crossing the James river. A small part of their troops, however, had only left this side with their baggage, so that, as I remarked, we had to contend with their whole army.

It would appear that Lord Cornwallis designs

sending a succour to Carolina, perhaps some to Portsmouth, and the remainder peradventure to New York.

General Gregory was surprised at Northwest river bridge, twelve miles from the great Bridge, lost a few militia and got the rest dissipated. The enemy in this quarter have withdrawn all their troops to Portsmouth, and there are not wanting appearances that they do not consider themselves perfectly easy in this situation. Their fears, however, either here or at Portsmouth cannot arise from our force.

I am, my dear Sir, most sincerely and with the greatest respect, your Excellency's

Most obst.

James McHenry.

His Excellency,
Governor Lee.

7th July 1781.
10 o'clock P. M.

Dear Sir:

We have received certain advice that the rear of the British army crossed from James Town to the Cobham side at noon. Part of the army is in motion to

take possession of the place.

I have the honor to be

Your Excellency's most obst.

James McHenry.

Governor Lee.

Headquarters near Loan's Bridge.

10th July 1781.

My dear Sir:

It was a maxim with the Cardinal de Retz, always, after a series of good news to prepare himself for bad. We have experienced more of the former to the Southward than could have been expected, and now, it is probable, we must submit to much of the latter. General Jones writes from North Carolina, July the 6th, that a large reinforcement had arrived at Charlestown (about 2000), and that Lord Rawdon, Earl Lincoln and General Gould were in pursuit of General Greene, who had been obliged to raise the siege of Ninety-six, in precipitation, and whose force was insufficient to impede the enemy's progress. It is also mentioned in a Charlestown paper of the 27th that Greene had at-

tempted the place by assault, in which he suffered considerably.

In some of my last letters, I believe it was suggested that the army under Cornwallis might be destined for different quarters. This may still happen, but he is now on his march, having left no post on this side James river, and is looking towards Carolina. His co-operating army may be about this time near the confines of North Carolina. We are following his Lordship. You know our force; it is as nothing, and I need not speak to you of Greene's. Nor need you be told, that although Cornwallis appears to be leaving us quiet in this State, yet, that both it and Maryland is in more danger than when he was directing his march to Fredericksburg.

In the confidence of friendship, my dear Governor, let me observe, that if you have any troops to send forward, (in addition to those under Adams) that it is of the utmost consequence to make their march an instant measure. Greene is prudent, and will, if possible, wait for his succours, before he hazards all the ground between him and you. Our affairs are critical. Administration must be energetic. I know you are of a decisive cast, and that you will not scruple to confide your reputation, when it is your country demands the stake, to men, who never suffer it to sink. Let letters be addressed to the country collectors of the levies. Let Smith be called upon to take the most vigorous steps to furnish them with clothing. Let the people clamour,

but save the State. I cannot help telling you, that I apprehend the greatest evils from procrastination, and I am sure that neither of us wish to shed tears over a peace.

I write you in a hurry; but it is in the openness of a heart, which I hope you will always consider as affectionately attached to your excellency.

James McHenry.

His Excellency,
Governor Lee.

July 11th, 1781.

My dear Sir:

I enclose for your private satisfaction and that of your friends a copy of the official report of the affair of the 6th, which goes to Congress by this express. You, who are in the secret of our numbers, must not smile at our driving off Lord Cornwallis or at our making him retreat every time we came near him. Indeed, it was high time his Lordship should retreat, as our militia were leaving us daily. Believe me, we have attempted sorcery and magic, and I have reason to think that it had its effect. His Lordship must have been

deceived. Legerdemain is a very necessary science for an American general at this moment. Green's, poor fellow, has been seen through. We are going to assist him.

I am, dear Sir,

Most respectfully yours,

James McHenry.

Greene Inclosure.

Ambler Plantation,
Opposite James Island.

8th July, 1781.

Sir:

On the 4th inst. the enemy evacuated Williamsburg, where some stores fell into our hands, and retired to this place under the cannon of their shipping. Next morning, we advanced to Bird's tavern, and a party of the army took post at Nowel's Mill, about nine miles from the British camp. The 6th I detached an advance corps under General Wayne, with a view of reconnoitering the enemy's situation. Their light parties being drawn in, the pickets which lay close to their incampment were gallantly attacked by some riflemen, whose skill was employed to great effect. Having ascertained that Lord Cornwallis had sent off his baggage under a proper escort and posted his army in an open field, fortified by the shipping, I returned to the detachment, which I found more generally engaged. A piece of

cannon had been attempted by the vanguard under Major Galvan, whose conduct deserves high applause. Upon this, the whole British army came out and advanced to the thin wood occupied by General Wayne. His corps, chiefly composed of Pennsylvanians and some light infantry, did not exceed some eight hundred men, with three field pieces. But notwithstanding their numbers, at sight of the British army, the troops ran to the rencountre. A short skirmish ensued, with a close, warm and well directed firing, but as the enemy's right and left, of course, greatly outflanked ours, I sent General Wayne orders to retire half a mile to where Colonels Vose and Barbers' light infantry battalions had arrived by a rapid move, and where I ordered them to form. In this position they remained till some hours after sunset. The militia under General Lawson had been advanced, and the Continentals were at Nowel's Mill, where the enemy retreated in the night to James Island, which they also evacuated, crossing over to the South side of the river. Their ground at this place and the Island was successfully occupied by General Muhlenberg. Many valuable horses were left on their retreat. From every account the enemy's loss has been very great, and much pains taken to conceal it. Their light infantry and brigade of guards and two British regiments formed the first line, the remainder of their army the second. The cavalry paraded, but did nothing. By the inclosed return you will see what part of General Wayne's detachment suffered most. The

services rendered by the officers make me happy to think, that although many were wounded, we have lost none. Most of the field officers had their horses killed. The same accident to every horse of two field pieces made it impossible to move them unless men had been sacrificed.. But it is enough for the glory of General Wayne and the officers and men he commanded, to have attacked the whole British army with a reconnoitring party only, close to their incampment, and by this severe skirmish hastened their retreat over the river. Colonel Boyer, of the riflemen, is a prisoner.

I have the honor to be, with the highest regards, etc., etc.

Maj. Gen. Greene.

The superscription reads:

“With the Marquiss Lafayette’s Acct. of his action with Lord Cornwallis on the 6th enclosed.”

Holt’s forge, 11th July 1781.
11 o’clock P. M.

My dear Sir:

The express does not go off till morning, and we have received a dispatch from General Greene dated

Little River in the district of 96, June 23. The General writes me, "Fortune is my enemy, or at least not much my friend. We were contemplating the reduction of all the enemy's posts in South Carolina and Georgia, except Charlestown and Savannah, when the enemy received a reinforcement at Charlestown, which enabled them to raise the siege of 96. It was mortifying, indeed, to be obliged to leave a place which we had labored so much to reduce, and which we were within four days of effecting, and to be in possession of one of the enemy's works, when Lord Rawdon arrived and obliged us to retreat. Could I have collected a large body of militia, I would have fought him, but our numbers were too small to hazard an action, especially as this little army is all we have to depend upon. We prosecute the war upon such unequal terms in this country that I have nothing better to expect than disgrace and ruin, and unless a few of my friends can convince the sensible part of mankind that it is not the misapplication, but the want of means which is the cause of our misfortunes, I am sure that will be the case. Greater abilities might improve our force to greater advantage; but as for men, I can do no more than I have done. If my conduct is not satisfactory, I shall submit with pleasure to public censure."

He attacked two of the out works, one of which he carried. His loss was between 40 and 50. He retired on the 19th, when the enemy were within a few miles of 96.

The act of our late session of Assembly to raise a body of horse is one of the wisest measures which could have been adopted. It remains to prosecute its execution with vigor. Under our present circumstances, they are the most serviceable army we can raise. The enemy, sensible of this, have turned all their attention to it in South Carolina, and from their superior means must exceed us in cavalry. Among your exertions, my dear Governor, for our country, let this be a principal one. I believe we must risque everything here in order to succour Greene. Should no new charges arise, I shall urge the step.

I am, most respectfully, my dear Sir,

Yours,

James McHenry.

His Excellency,
Governor Lee.

12th July.
10 o'clock morning.

We have a dispatch from General Greene just now, dated 29th ult., by which we find he was rather intending opposition than a retreat..

J. McH.

Greene Inclosure.

High Hills of Santee,
17th July 1781.

I wrote from Bush river on the 23rd of June, since which we have been constantly on the move. In the afternoon of the same day I wrote you, I got intelligence that Lord Rawdon had crossed the Saluda river and was advancing to attack us. I immediately put the army in motion, having few or no militiamen, and retired toward Charlotte, on which route I had previously ordered provisions and forage to be provided. The enemy pursued us two days, but as our sick and wounded and stores had all been sent off before, they could effect nothing. However, it had a terrible effect upon the country. The people were flying with their families in all directions. The enemy advanced no further than the Eno Inn, and on the morning of the 26th began to retire toward 96. We halted near the crossroads at a point proper to file off to the Congaree on the return to the siege of 96. I kept the Legion cavalry close at their heels.. Lord Rawdon lay at 96 two days, and then, with little more than one-half his force, began his march toward the Congaree, leaving Colonel Cruger at 96 with the rest. From these appearances, it was evident the enemy meant to hold the post of 96 and re-establish themselves on the Congaree at Fridays Ferry, to prevent which we left our baggage and invalids at Winnsborough, with orders to proceed

to Camden, and marched with all possible expedition for the Congaree. But his Lordship arrived there two days before, who, on our appearance, retired to Orangeburg with evident marks of precipitation, which discovered our movements were unexpected. Captain Eggleston made a stroke at his horse, which served to increase his confusion.

From a persuasion that the enemy would attempt to establish themselves at the Congaree, I had directed Generals Sumter and Marion to collect all the force they could, and meet me at that place, but the enemy's movements had given the country such a general alarm that the few militia in our interest were tardy in turning out. I left the army on the march for the Congaree, and went ahead with our cavalry to collect our force at the best point for operating. We got intelligence by an intercepted letter that Colonel Stewart, with a reinforcement of four or five hundred men, was conveying a quantity of provisions and stores from Charlestown up to Lord Rawdon. We made a rapid march with the whole of our cavalry and a body of mounted militia under Marion to intercept them, but unfortunately we were too late. However, Col. Harry took three of their waggons, loaded with a variety of stores. On the arrival of the army on the Congaree, we drew our force together at Beaver Creek. Gen. Vickery was detached towards 96 to watch the motions of the enemy in that quarter. With the rest of our horse, being joined by Gens. Sumter and Marion with

about 2000 men, composed of State troops and militia, we began our march on the 11th to attack the enemy at Orangeburg. We arrived before the town on the 12th, but we found them so strong and advantageously posted that we had little hopes of succeeding, as our cavalry, from the nature of the ground, could not act to advantage. Nor could we have improved a defeat, as the enemy had a safe retreat over the Edisto river, and the only pass defended by a large British goal, equal to any common redoubt, in which and several other buildings they were posted. Could we have got them out into the open country, we could have cut them to pieces in a few minutes, but, secured on one side as they were by, to us, an impassable river, and covered on the other by the buildings, little was to be expected from their attack. In this situation we got intelligence of the evacuation of 96, and that Colonel Cruger, with the force with him, were on their march in the forks of the Edisto for Orangeburg. There was no possibility of striking at him, as the north branch of the Edisto, which lay between us, had no other pass for thirty miles either above or below that which the enemy occupied. As the evacuation of 96 was one great object of our manœuvre, and as the enemy were driven from the Congaree, we thought it most likely by attacking their lower posts at Monks Corner and Dorchester, which are nothing but churches occupied, we should prevent their return to the Congaree and oblige them to retire into the lower country for the protection of those posts.

Generals Butler and Marion, with the Legion cavalry, were detached upon this service, and began their march from the neighborhood of Orangeburg on the 13th, at which time we began our march for this place to refresh the army and form a junction with General Sumner and a body of militia expected from Salisbury district. The day after we left Orangeburg, the enemy formed their junction, and had not made any movement the day before yesterday.

Nath Greene.

Inclosure.

High Hills of Santee.

July 24 1781.

Our late movements below did not fully answer my expectations. Never was a better opportunity afforded an officer than General Sumter had, but he had detached his force so much, and was so deceived by appearances of an attack, as to suffer the garrison at Biggar's Church to escape. They made a feint as if to attack, and retired under cover of this party after setting the church and stores on fire. This was just in the close of the day. Their retreat was not discovered till next morning, when the Legion and State horse were ordered to pursue. They came up with and at-

tacked the enemy's rear guard and all their baggage. Captain Armstrong, who led the van, charged through a great part of the enemy's line, but as they were forming just over a bridge connected with a long causeway, the cavalry were halted, though Armstrong had got over the bridge and was obliged to file off down the river. The enemy formed in a range of houses on Shoebrick's plantation. General Sumter came up and made an attack, but the enemy maintained their post for want of artillery, which had been left behind, until our people spent all their ammunition and were obliged to retire. The firing was close and warm, and the militia and State troops behaved with a degree of gallantry which would have done honor to veterans. The cavalry could not act. There were taken in the expedition about 140 prisoners, and the enemy's loss in killed and wounded is thought to be little short, as the firing lasted upwards of two hours and not more than from forty to fifty yards distance. We destroyed four vessels loaded with store, upwards of seventy hhd. of wine and many other stores. At Biggar's Church, took 200 horse and several waggons, one loaded with ammunition. Lord Rawdon moved down from Orangeburg with a considerable force, leaving part at that post, who are still there, and our people retired. Our loss in the different attacks was inconsiderable, not more than 20 killed and about 40 wounded, among which are several officers.

(No signature.)

Headquarters, 26 July 1781.

Dear Sir:

You will no doubt have received from Congress copies of ministerial letters to Sir Henry Clinton. At present, the place is deranged and its continuing so will in a great measure rest with us. England was so far gone in the conquest of America as to announce to the different courts of Europe that four Southern States were wholly in her possession and at perfect peace with the Mother-country. This, it is probable, assisted in putting an end to the much talked-of recognition. I dare say, however, the Czarina and the Emperor will bring it on again. And by-the-by, this said Emperor has the best appointed and largest army in Europe, and may be desirous to recover certain tracts of land which were once in his family. Should this kindle a war with France, it might not be auspicious to see, but let us think that his policy will manage this matter so as to keep the Emperor quiet till our business is done. In this case, or in any case, we shall have the negotiation renewed, and should we be successful in this campaign, I do not despair of a peace in 1782. But one is afraid to decide upon any point of this nature; advantages seen the most likely, things turn out contrary to the best calculations. Spain is once more employed against Gibraltar, and not a little enemy with France for preventing its relief. The affairs of England in the East Indies are really tumbling into ruin, as mentioned

in our papers. Holland moves slowly, but my principal fear from Europe is lest the Emperor should enter the lists as a disputant instead of as a negotiator.

The movements against New York are in our favor, but will we improve them? Will we fill up our army and expel, or, if this cannot be accomplished, confine the enemy to mere posts? Without we do this, we shall not rejoice much over a peace. Our State is far from secure. Nothing in our rivers to divert small parties or to delay military operations. Every part exposed. Believe me, the State has never been so delicately, so dangerously situated. This, my dear Governor, makes my truly anxiously that you should be properly supported, and that our different counsels may acquire a vigor and wisdom which they have not always displayed. On this account, the ensuing choice of civil officers will be more important and consequential to the State than any made during the war. I hope it will be a good one, and that good men will not leave us when the moments become most trying and critical. I know you will be with us at this period.

I feel the force and goodness of your last letter, which is very dear to me for the proofs it contains of your friendship. I have written honest Forrest that I fear my health will not make me a fit person for one of the council, should I be appointed, that as the duties of the Senate were less severe, I should, under my present circumstances, give it the preference. I will, however, my dear Sir, let the matter have a second considera-

tion. Personal attachment will weigh much in this case if my health, which has not been benefitted by the campaign, will but suffer it. But lest it should not, I told Forrest that I would be glad to have it in my power to make a choice of the offices at the time of serving by my election to both, which you know is not at all incompatible with our Constitution.

Lord Cornwallis is at Portsmouth with his main body. An advance party is at Suffolk, and another at Smithfield. About 1000 have embarked for New York, said to be under General Lester.

With the greatest regard and attachment, I have the honor to be

Your Excellency's most obst.

James McHenry.

His Excellency
Governor Lee.

Superinscribed:

Col. Hendricks will be pleased to forward this letter.

James McHenry.

Malvern Hill.
29th July 1781.

Dear Sir:

It is not easy to make anything out of Lord Cornwallis' present movements. The fleet with about thirteen hundred troops on board (and some say 2000) were by our latest advices still in Hampton road. Since taking this position, there have been winds that would have carried them out of the Capes or up the Bay. They have pilots on board acquainted with the navigation of the upper parts of the Chesapeak. The fleet is watered; and the enemy give out that Baltimore is the place of destination. I know not well what to say in this case. To deceive more effectively, generals sometimes announce their real intentions. Lord Cornwallis has done this in some instances. Going up the Bay is also agreeable to the ministerial system. The composition of the troops is likewise calculated for such service, comprehending the light infantry or a regiment of cavalry or the Queen's rangers. On the other hand, New York seems to call for their assistance. And they may be waiting for a convoy or a second embarkation. In fine, if I dared to conclude any thing, it would be that they are destined for New York. Nevertheless, precautions might not be improper in your quarter. But I state the intelligence, and you will be the best judge of the measure. It appears to me that this State will not be evacuated, nor their design of penetrating Mary-

land even suspended at this moment unless the French have obtained such a naval superiority as to place New York and Charlestown in the last degree of danger. Such an event only, or a certainty that the enemy here will be too exposed to capture from such a superiority, can, or will, force them from this State. The Maryland dragoons have been ordered to return, and I suppose have commenced their march this morning.

With the most perfect respect, I have the honor to be, Sir, your Excellency's

Most obt. Serv.

James McHenry.

His Excellency
Governor Lee.

Malvern Hill.
30th July 1781.

My dear Sir:

The intelligence which remains after the General's letter is fit only to excite conjecture. On the 27th, nineteen flat-bottom boats, with horse and foot, crossed from Portsmouth to Norfolk. The troops then marched towards Kemp's landing. The day after, two

companies of Hessians took the same route. This, one would say, looks to the Southward.

We have nothing official from General Greene, but it is reported that affairs are again in his favor. His fortune is a perfect resemblance of life. General Wayne and General Morgan are at Goods bridge, on the South side of James river. Col. Moylen and one regiment of light infantry will cross today to take a post in front. The militia and the remainder of the infantry on this side.

With the most sincere respect and attachment, I have the honor to be, dear Sir,

Your Excellency's most obst.

James McHenry.

His Excellency
Governor Lee.

The foregoing letter Governor Lee forwarded to the Congress, writing that body at the same time on the date of August 4. "The State is making every exertion to collect such a force as with the regulars will enable us to confine the enemy within very narrow limits. Our people are resolute and determined, they feel an animating spirit which diffused itself in all ranks at the commencement of the contest. The approach of the enemy apparently has banished every sordid, avari-

cious and selfish view, and we trust our people will act like men, sensible of the blessings they are struggling for, and the miseries, which by an abject and dastardly conduct they most deservedly feel."

He requested help towards the army of the militia and reminded Congress "that it had not often been troubled with applications from this State;" continuing "we flatter ourselves the exertions of our people upon all occasions merit every assistance that can be afforded."*

Malvern Hill.
1st August.

My dear Sir:

I dare not venture a comment upon what the Council sends you. As I said in my confidential letter, sent by express, you are a judge in the case. The same precautions and measures, however, will be necessary as if we had the fullest assurance of their being destined up the Bay.

The whole army, that which is on the south side

*See *Life and Correspondence of James J. McHenry*, by Bernard C. Steiner, 1907.

of James river and that which is on this side, will be in motion today towards Fredericksburg, or for your support.

Most respectfully and affectionately, I have the honor to be, my dear Sir, your Excellency's most obst.

James McHenry.

His Excellency
Governor Lee.

Malvern Hill.
1st Augt. 1781.

Dear Sir:

The case of difficulty is nearly decided. The British appear determined to try our spirit and patriotism. Maryland cannot keep her ground at first, but let me prognosticate that the event will be different from the enemy's expectations. I hope our friends will not lose their faces at this juncture; if they do, some of them may also lose their fortunes. I feel most sensibly for your public situation; and, when the time comes, that you may think me of use, I will not scruple at small sacrifices.

The levies which the Marquiss has ordered on are to be stopped and applied, as your Excellency will per-

ceive by the inclosed letter, which is left open for your perusal. Gen. Gist goes to Baltimore. The officer who carries it has instructions, in case he should meet the levies, to return them to Maryland. At this moment, it is impossible for me to say what success you can have from this army, but you shall soon know.

I have the honor to be, with the most perfect attachment,

Your Excellency's most obst.

James McHenry.

His Excellency
Governor Lee.

New Castle, 6 Augt. 1781.
1st.

My dear Sir:

Maryland is relieved by the enemy's establishing themselves in York river. But as this is a movement not of choice, there is no saying how long you will be safe. The measure, there is good reason to believe, is in consequence of advice of a superior naval power expected on this coast. So you see upon what you have to depend. Under these circumstances, your military preparations are as necessary as ever. You will either

want them for your own defense or to assist us. Believe one who is not apt to judge rashly, who has long since told you of what has been so near taking place, that relaxation may involve evil to the State of the most permanent nature. There was a time when we could blunder with impunity, but a blunder now may prove fatal. I need not be more explicit to your Excellency. You must be aware of the very critical situation of affairs, both in America and Europe.

You are filling up the Continental line, but something might also be attempted for internal security. The enemy do not lose sight of Baltimore, and that place may not be unworthy a little attention. I will give you my sentiments in a few words. If the works for the defense of the harbor cannot be repaired, they should be levelled. If at least one gally, and a boom, cannot be provided, nothing of value should remain in the town. But if the works can be put in a state of defense, a gally completed, and a boom established with a proper militia garrison, the place will be secure from any small detachment; and with an equal army in their neighborhood, the enemy will not venture to send a large one. At this moment, measures of this nature would have the most happy effect.

With the sincerest regard and the most perfect re-

spect and attachment, I have the honor to
Your Excellency's most obst.

James McHenry.

His Excellency
Gov. Lee.
(Marked private.)

Afternoon, 6th Augt.
2d.

Our advices from the Southward come only down to the 17th of July. The enemy had evacuated ninety-six. A party of Col. Lee's legion had taken fifty of the enemy's cavalry. Gen. Greene was on the High Hills of Santee and had detached Gen. Sumpter to attack the enemy's outposts near Charlestown, with a view of forcing the whole body down into the lower country. If this failed, as soon as the season and his force would admit, he intends new operations to compel the enemy to leave the upper country.

I am, with the greatest respect and attachment,
Your Excellency's most obst.

James McHenry.

His Excellency
Gov. Lee.

New Castle, 6th Augt. 1781.

3d

My dear Sir :

I had not time in the morning to send you what I now inclose. As it is not a public letter, I beg you will not suffer any copies to be made. By authentic accounts from Europe, England has refused the mediation of Russia for a separate peace between her and Holland. A restoration of what she has taken from the Dutch was the basis, which she did not chuse to comply with. Her idea was to take the Dutch islands, which were easy conquests, in the expectation that the French, in order to recover them for the Dutch would give up on a peace an equal number of those English ones they have taken or might take. The subject, however, may be again considered at the general Congress for a peace, which may meet about February next.

I have the honor to be, with the most perfect regard and attachment,

Your Excellency's most obst.

James McHenry.

His Excellency
Gov. Lee.

Inclosure.

Richmond, 6th Augt. 1781.

Sir:

In conformity to the instructions from Major General the Marquiss de la Fayette, and your request to commit them to writing, I have the honor to submit the following request to your Excellency, and to solicit your resolves respecting the same.

As the war in this State is every day becoming more regular and systematic, it is of the first consequence to the officer who conducts it, to possess the most perfect knowledge of its magazines & resources, that he may avoid false calculations. Your Excellency is well aware how much the success of military operations have at all times depended on this knowledge. When these are once ascertained, a General sensible of what he has to trust to, either builds his projects upon what he has, or if he extends them, augments his magazines from other sources. But that we may fix our ideas on this subject, let us settle the enemy's force in this quarter, at 4,500 effectives. To oppose this properly will require at least 8,000 troops of the present composition (which is allowing for the difference in discipline), and if anything serious for their discipline can be attempted, 12,000, which is no more than the usual superiority in cases of siege. We will not enter into the advantages to the State from confining the British to a point, and thus leaving its industry at freedom, because

it is evident these would exceed the expense. Nor will we take notice of its effect in Europe, this being equally well understood. It is only necessary to consider it as a military question, and to determine with precision the quantity of provision which the State will engage itself to furnish. However, in a computation of this nature, it is essential to observe that if we have 8,000 effectives to provide, the estimate must be 12,000 rations a day; and if 12,000 men, a proportionate number of rations.

The next point, then, to be established, is, for what length of time the State can furnish this quantity of provision. Having determined this, the General would beg your Excellency's attention to its formation into magazines. This is an object of vast importance, and must, when completed, give great ease to every military operation, as well as to the State. Fewer waggons will then be wanted for transportation; and during its collection, it is imagined that the people will employ their teams with little reluctance, finding them not so subject to impress as they now are in bringing it from so many quarters to the army. The principal places of deposit may be & &.

In all this, the General does not lose sight of what supplies the Southern army expects, and which may be necessary for its support. But he presumes the State, in computing for his wants, will not overlook Gen. Greene's.

The number of militia mentioned above, implies an equal number of muskets, bayonets, and cartouch

boxes. But in these several articles there is the most alarming deficiency. By Mr. McRoberts' return Augt. the 1st, the aggregate on hand and in use, in General Stevens & General Lawson's brigades was only 1339 muskets, 535 bayonets, and 1106 c. boxes.

Ammunition is of no less consideration. The magazines should be made adequate to the demand of an army of 12,000 men. It is the General's hope that your Excellency's arrangements on this will be productive.

(No signature.)

Camp on Pamunkey,
10th Augt. 1781.

Let me add, my dear Sir, a word or two to the General's letter. I have been with the Governor and Council of this State to make arrangements for the evening. I inclose you a copy of some of the subjects of my mission. As the answers will require time, I could not, of course, wait at Richmond to receive them. Some dispositions of the same nature may be necessary for Maryland. You see, we are impotent for want of arms.

I inclose you an extract of Gen. Greene's proceedings down to the 24th. You will observe that it is of a priv-

ate nature, and, of course, only that which speaks of killed, wounded & taken, for the public. The enemy's force in S. Carolina is about 4,000 infantry and 400 horse, besides 2000 militia Tories.

Some of your friends have plaid you a trick and published some parts of my private letters to your Excellency which would have been better in manuscript.

The enemy are going on with their works at York. This will be their principal fortified place. The movements at Portsmouth look as if it was to be evacuated. No troops have as yet sailed from this quarter for New York—but it is not improbable that the troops at Portsmouth will go on this service.

Most respectfully and with the utmost attachment, I have the honor to be

Your Excellency's obst.

James McHenry.

His Excy. Governor Lee.

Camp Pamunkey,
10th Augt. 1781.

Ah, my dear Sir, you have not raised my vanity by your flattering letter of the 4th, but you have given me fresh cause to cultivate your friendship. I have done

nothing for my country that deserves any praise (torn out). Had I done a great deal, I would not expect any. To be esteemed or loved by a few individuals is a reward very few men obtain. If I can secure this, I shall be very fortunate. If your Assembly and Lord Cornwallis do not oppose it, I hope to make my personal respects to your Lady for her polite remembrance.

Most sincerely, I have the honor to be, my dear Sir,

Your Excellency's most obst.

James McHenry.

His Excellency
Gov. Lee.

Man's Tavern,
Sunday morning.

Sir:

Although accounts your Excellency received last night are not decisive or final, yet it is possible they may render some alteration in General Washington's instructions to the Marquiss necessary. If the objects of the expedition were fixed and pointed out, the Marquiss may be embarrassed to proceed beyond these. I beg leave, therefore, to suggest to your Excellency the

propriety of transmitting in your private capacity the intelligence to General Washington by express, that he may have it in his power to accommodate his orders to the worst of events. I would have waited on your Excellency were I not confined to my chamber with a slight fever.

With the greatest respect, I have the honor to be
Your Excellency's most obt. and very hble. Servt.

James McHenry.

His Excellency,
Governor Lee.

Camp Fork of York river,
21st Augt. 1781.
12 o'clock P. M.

I can tell you but little news, my dear Sir, so little, that this letter will only serve as a security against bad reports.

The enemy still keep a small garrison at Portsmouth. Their principal force is at York. Dundas commands at Gloster Town, and Simcoe's horse act on the same side. On the 18th the Gloster militia and a few others, under Col. Innis, carried a forage within a few miles of Gloster Town, with only the loss of

three men prisoners and two horse. We are today engaged in another forage, supported by Col. Moylan's cavalry and some infantry.

Lord Cornwallis neither pushes his works with rapidity on the water or land side. Like some of the heroes in romance, he appears to despise armour and to confide in his own natural strength. Would you not, after all this, be surprised to hear good news from this quarter?

Most affectionately and with the greatest attachment, I have the honor to be

Your Excellency's most obst.

James McHenry.

His Excellency
Gov. Lee.

24th Augt. 1781.

My dear Sir:

The enemy have evacuated Portsmouth and removed the garrison to York. Their whole force now is within the compass of a few miles. We shall soon see what they intend to do with it.

I have the honor to be, most respectfully and with
the greatest attachment,

Your Excellency's most obst.

James McHenry.

His Excellency
Governor Lee.

Mrs. Ruffins, 25 Augt. 1781.

My dear Sir:

The garrison, baggage, cannon, refugees, and negroes from Portsmouth have been landed at York, and his Lordship begins to look as if he wished to do something. — 'Tis a maxim with him that ruin to Great Britain or a loss of the Southern conquests must be the consequence of defensive measures. Be assured, Cornwallis is a modern Hannibal. A few days since, Tarleton struck at a small body of our militia on the York side, and took ten or twelve. He is now on the Gloster side, where the whole horse of the enemy are collected.

I have the honor to be, most respectfully and with the greatest attachment,

Your Excellency's most obst.

James McHenry.

His Excellency
Gov. Lee.

Ruffins Ferry,
28 Augt. 1781.

My dear Sir:

If you will keep a secret, I will tell you one; but if you do not choose to keep it, read no further. The 30th of this month, the Count de Grasse was to sail from the West Indies with a large fleet and troops for the Chesapeak. You know that he is superior to Rodney. He may not, however, have sailed on the day fixed. His arrival is very important to Maryland. But there must be a race between him and his antagonist. If the latter gains Chesapeak first and the British squadron now at New York should remain there, Clin-

ton and Cornwallis may be both out of our power. For I do not conceive that the French can effect an entrance in the harbor of New York or lay long enough before it to reduce the place by blockade, while Rodney in the Chesapeak may hold out against any possible force. In this case, the experiment may fall upon Charlestown. You see, my dear Governor, upon what a thread great good or great evil to our country is suspended.

As this is a communication of the most confidential nature and of the utmost importance to be kept secret, I am well assured it will be sacredly preserved.

The enemy appear to be apprized of the impending danger, and even to be waivering with respect to their conduct. But they are making York very strong, and we are taking measures to prevent his Lordship from retreating by land to Carolina. This would be a daring attempt; and circumstanced as he is, and delighting in difficulties as much as a Hannibal, a Scipio, or a Caesar, he may not think it too hazardous to put in practice. However, I do not believe he will rest his safety on such an issue; but that he will rely upon his troops where he is, the arrival of Rodney, or a relief, should the Count de Grasse gain the Chesapeak.

Adieu, my dear Sir.

Most affectionately and respectfully,

James McHenry.

A propos, should the State make me a civil man, I must beg a week or two's indulgence in this quarter, but this will be a hereafter consideration.

Camp Ruffins, 30 Augt. 1781.

Dear Sir:

I never wrote you a word respecting sending forward the levies, the reasons for which you will easily comprehend. The honor of the State is now peculiarly interested in the measure. Cornwallis appears to have the most serious designs of a march to Carolina. Should his Lordship succeed in this, it will be out of my power to prevent the Marquiss in his official letter, from laying the blame on your Excellency and Council's not forwarding the troops agreeable to his repeated requests.

The armament from the West Indies, which has sailed and is destined for this Bay, should free the State from any present apprehensions. We look for its arrival in a few days, and it is of such strength as you may be assured puts everything in our power. But should Cornwallis be able in the meantime to retreat to Carolina, he will there be secure and will return when the cause which forces him from this quarter is removed. As this letter is of a personal and confidential nature, I beg you to consider it as such.

With the greatest respect and attachment, I have the honor to be, dear Sir,

Your Excellency's most obst.

James McHenry.

His Excellency
Gov. Lee.

30th Augt. 1781.

My dear Sir:

You will make what use you please of the inclosed with the Council. It is now that I think the presence of the troops utterly and absolutely essential, and that their march here, if possible, should be performed with wings. A thousand things which engage me, will only let me add that Gen. Wayne has crossed to the south side of the James river, and that we are in motion to a position near the north side, proper to watch his Lordship's movements.

Adieu, most affectionately,

James McHenry.*

His Excellency
Gov. Lee.

Headquarters, 11th Sepr. 1781.

My dear Sir:

Sometime since, the Congress, without being

*Even six months previously, a letter from Lafayette to Washington, dated Head of Elk, March 7, 1781, contained this passage: "The State of Maryland has made me every offer in their power. Mr. McHenry has been very active in accelerating the measures of his State."

See monograph on James McHenry, by Frederick J. Brown, Maryland Historical Society, 1877.

asked, took it into their heads to appoint me a Major in the Continental Army. As I was neither pleased with the rank, nor their slowness in granting it, I conceived myself at liberty to serve my country in my own way, without taking any notice of their commission. Of course, I continued to act as a private gentleman; intending at the same time to preserve this character unless my circumstances should render a military rank necessary. However, as this appointment, although not formally accepted, may possibly raise some doubts respecting my being eligible, on the principles of the Constitution, to a civil office, I have therefore inclosed a formal resignation, but yet it is my wish not to have it shown to produce an appointment, unless its being withheld would prevent one.

I thought it well enough to place this in your hands, that I might have nothing to blame myself with. But you will retain it till I have the pleasure of seeing you, as I may perhaps make an addition expressive of my sense of so procrastinated a favor. I assure you I feel no resentment; but I think it may be permitted one to pay some little respect to that justice which belongs to himself. I shall not plead aught in excuse for a trouble which I flatter myself will hardly be considered as such.

With the greatest regard and attachment to your
Excellency, I have the honor to be, dear Sir,

Your obst.

James McHenry.

His Excellency
Gov. Lee.

Holt's forge, 1st Sept. 1781.
3 o'clock P. M.

We are just going, my dear Governor, to begin the campaign. Cornwallis is at York and Gloster; General Washington, with the French troops and a large attachment from the American Army at or near the head of Elk; Count de Grasse in the Bay; and some of his frigates in James river. The armament is powerful in ships and land forces. I will not check your rejoicings on this happy event. It will only be necessary for us to remember that the stay of the fleet is to be very short. Do not let this be printed.

Adieu,

James McHenry.

His Excellency
Gov. Lee.

Count Barrass is also coming from Rhode Island with his squadron and the troops left on the Island.

Williamsburg,
9th Sepr. 1781.

My dear Sir:

The Marquiss is informed, but not officially, that on the 5th inst. Admiral Hood made his appearance off the Cape with fourteen ships of the line, upon which the Count de Grasse gave him chase with twenty-two. In clearing the Cape, the Count was to leeward, but four of his best sailing ships got up with the English, and sustained an action of an hour against ten before they could be supported. At last ten others joined, when the engagement became heavy, incessant, and general till night. The British fleet retreated, and the French fleet were seen in close pursuit as long as the light would indulge observation. Col. Banister, who gives this intelligence, says it is from an acquaintance of character, who was an eye-witness to the action from half past 3 o'clock till night. We expect soon to hear the event, and of the junction of Count Barrass's squadron, which sailed sometime since from Rhode Island. Every new hour, at this period, becomes more important than the last. There is much to hope, but we are not without something to fear. Adieu.

James McHenry.

His Excellency
Governor Lee.

To be forwarded by the chain of express.

Williamsburg,
14th Sepr. 1781.

My dear Sir:

As we have no account of the return of the fleet, nor anything very interesting from his Lordship save that his works must soon render him invisible, I will tell your excellency what General Greene was doing on the 26th of last month. He was then on his march to Fridays ferry, collecting the militia, in order to give the enemy battle. I shall only add another paragraph from Gen. Greene's letter. "We have intercepted a great many of the enemy's letters. Those from Virginia and Charlestown mentioned Gen. Leslie's coming to take the command in this quarter, which induces me to believe Lord Cornwallis either expects to be made Commander-in-Chief or has further operations in contemplation in Virginia or Maryland. One of the letters mentions an embarkation of three thousand troops for Baltimore."

I have the honor to be your Excellency's most obst.

James McHenry.

His Excellency
Gov. Lee.

Williamsburg,
15th Sepr. 1781.

Everything, my dear Sir, is as it should be. Yesterday morning his Excellency the General arrived in camp, and early this morning we had the account of the return of the Count de Grasse, accompanied by the Rhode Island fleet. The action mentioned to you was of very little consequence, and yet the French lost five or six officers. Admirals Graves and Hood displayed twenty ships of the line, and the Count de Grasse only twenty-two, having left the other six for the protection of the Bay. The English saved themselves, as it is said we have sometimes done, by running away.

Count de Grasse brought in with them the Iris and Richmond, which he found cruising off the Capes.

So far, our affairs assume the most prosperous aspect, but when we reflect that war is like an April day, it will temper our mind to disappointment; notwithstanding, there has been no enterprise of ours attended with so happy and promising a combination of circumstances.

Respectfully and full of attachment, I have the honor to be

Your Excellency's most obst.

James McHenry.

His Excellency
Gov. Lee

15th Sepr. 1781.

My dear Sir:

Let me add a line to what I wrote your Excellency this morning. General Washington has sent an express to the troops embarked, and those at Annapolis and Baltimore, by water, to tell them that the Bay is clear and to hasten their sailing. If it has not arrived, it might not be improper to convey this information to the Commanding Officer, that no time may be lost, where time is so very precious.

I have the honor to be

Your Excellency's most obst.

James McHenry.

His Excellency
Gov. Lee.

Camp before York,
2d October, 1781.

My dear Sir:

Your congratulations are without compliment, and this makes them with me of the last value. I should thank you for a thousand things in which your services must have been active; but I will do what is better in itself; I will endeavor to deserve your good opinion and friendship.

Let me refer you to Col. Forrest for the news. I have only to add, that we have two small works in some forwardness—and that the enemy have fired and continue to fire on them from their batteries, but have not killed us four men.—Perhaps we shall begin upon our trenches tomorrow night.

The French fleet remain in the Bay and do not intend going out before we have closed the siege.

Affectionately and sincerely, I have the honor to be

Your Excellency's most obst.

James McHenry.

His Excellency
Gov. Lee.

Camp before York,
3d October, 1781.

I have sent you, my dear Sir, an express with the news, but as another opportunity offers, and as Col. Forrest thought a letter necessary respecting my election as Senator, I have given the second. All this, however, is giving you a great deal of trouble, but I know you will not be displeas'd. We have not heard from General Greene since his victory of Sept. 8th. You

know that it was obstinate and bloody; that he drove the enemy four miles—that he took between three and four hundred prisoners—that nothing could exceed the bravery of the Maryland and Virginia troops—that all his troops behaved well—and that he was taking measures to oblige the enemy to leave their position at the Brick house at the Eaton springs, or to force them to surrender in it. If we are successful in this quarter, we may then talk of the gulph from which we have been snatched.

Very sincerely, I have the honor to be

Your Excellency's most obst.

James McHenry.

His Excellency
Gov. Lee.

Camp before York,
6th October, 1781.

My dear Sir:

I have not a moment to spare, and therefore inclose you General Greene's private detail of his last action, because I know there are passages in it which must be highly gratifying to your Excellency. Tonight we be-

gin to work upon our first parallel. This siege will be a very anxious business.

The Duke's legion has had a little affair with Col. Tarleton on the Gloster side. The Duke drove him into Golster; killed and wounded about 50 of his men, with the loss of two killed and eleven wounded.

I have the honor to be, with the greatest attachment,

Your Excellency's most obst.

James McHenry.

His Excellency
Gov. Lee.

Camp before York,
9th Oct. 1781.

My dear Sir:

I know your anxiety and I attempt to lessen it by every opportunity. I think I have told you that we opened our trenches between the 6th and 7th. The first parallel is nearly completed, and some batteries will be in readiness to play upon the enemy's works this afternoon. It was originally intended to wait until eighty pieces of cannon and mortars could be brought to operate, but a better acquaintance with circumstances has

changed this plan for the number we have at present prepared; these may be about twenty.

As yet, my Lord has scarcely disturbed us, his firing having only killed and wounded about sixteen. It is now, however, that we shall have more serious business. Our second parallel may require us to be in possession of two strong works, which defend the right and left of the enemy, and which it may be necessary for us to carry by storm. I have great confidence in our troops, and you may have as great. One hears no complainings, although the duty is not very light. A Major General and his division mounts the trenches twenty-four hours in every three days; and this is a place in which few men wish to sleep. In fine, every corps is desirous of distinguishing itself, and in military matters, your Excellency knows, this is always a good presage.

The French ships in York river will make a forward move as soon as the wind and tide is favorable. At present, it is not intended to pass the enemy's batteries.

With the greatest respect, I have the honor to be,
Sir,

Your Excellency's most obst.

James McHenry.

His Excellency
Gov. Lee,

10th October 1781.

My dear Sir:

This morning the French and American batteries act with great spirit and fire. But we shall be more eloquent before evening, as we shall speak with about fifty pieces. The enemy's answers are weak and without effect. It appears, however, as if they intended soon to give them more decision, having been employed last night in bringing from a frigate and one of their batteries, a number of heavy cannon.

With great respect, I have the honor to be

Your Excellency's most obst.

James McHenry.

His Excellency
Governor Lee.

October 11th.

Last night, which was our night in the trenches, we thought to have had the pleasure of opening the second parallel; but we were disappointed; and it will be commenced tonight by the Baron Steuben's division, of which the Maryland troops compose a part.

Some of our red-hot shot and shells set fire last

night to the Charon and two transports, which were entirely destroyed. This morning, another vessel was burnt. We have killed a number of the enemy and deranged some of their works, but till the batteries of the second parallel can be opened, we do not expect any very important effects.

Notwithstanding the vigilance of the French fleet, a small vessel from New York landed Major Gordon and another officer of the same rank yesterday morning at York. They bring dispatches, but we do not learn their nature. They talk, however, in the British lines that an essay will be made for their relief. I have had the pleasure of seeing Mr. Fitzhugh today and of your letter. There is not a service which I can render him, with General Greene, which he will not receive.

Respectfully, and with the greatest attachment, I have the honor to be

Your Excellency's most obst.

James McHenry.

His Excellency

Gov. Lee.

Lines before York,
15th October, 1781.

My dear Sir:

I am much fatigued by three days and two successful nights' duty; but not quite so much as to prevent me from congratulating your Excellency on the success of our enterprise against two of the enemy's redoubts on the extreme of their left. About 7 o'clock after sunset the light infantry under the Marquiss stormed the work to which they were opposed with great bravery and decision. The French grenadiers, who carried the second, I am told, have not suffered us to be their superior. Their loss is about 74 wounded and six killed; ours, in all, about 38. The former had to contend with the most numerous garrison. Several officers were wounded, but not one dangerously. Gimat is in the number. The greatest part of each garrison found means to escape, so that our prisoners do not exceed sixty. Col. Hamilton had the command of the party. Col. Laurens, who commanded a regiment, took the Major (Campbell) of the redoubt we assailed. The French possessed themselves of two royals. We found only a dismounted cannon and a barrel of hand grenades. We employed the rest of the night in extending the second parallel to the two redoubts, and in forming a covered way to the first. By tomorrow we expect to open some batteries within two hundred yards of his Lordship. As we approach, his fire has increased. He

does not, however, appear to have many mortars or howitzers, but from what he has, his fire of shells is incessant. It is now also his sorties will commence.

Most respectfully, I have the honor to be

Your Excellency's obst.

James McHenry.

His Excellency
Governor Lee.

16th October, 1781.

My dear Sir:

We are not to have much more rest till the siege terminates. This morning about daybreak the enemy made a sortie with their light infantry under Colonel Abercrombie, and got within the French part of our second parallel. The French grenadiers soon drove them back with loss, but not before they had spiked several of their and our cannon. This, however, is so badly done that the inconvenience can be instantly removed. Our light infantry moved rapidly to the support of our works, but as sorties are generally affairs of a moment, we, of course, arrived too late. In a letter from Gen. Jones of October 12th he says that "by late

letters from Gen. Greene we are informed the British were preparing to cross the Santee in force, from whence it is conjectured that some reinforcement which was intended for Lord Cornwallis and could not get in, has been thrown into Charlestown. Gen. Greene has sent his wounded and sick from the high hills of Santee to Charlotte in this State, and was joined a few days after by eleven hundred of our mountaineers, so that we hope he will still be a match for them."

I have the honor to be your Excellency's obst.

James McHenry

His Excellency
Gov. Lee.

There is here a gap of a few days in the otherwise unbroken series of McHenry's letters.

Whether he continued to inform Governor Lee of the momentous events of the following days, when on October 17th at ten o'clock in the morning, a drummer in red mounted the enemies' parapet and began to beat

a "parley," accompanied by an officer waving a white handkerchief, at sight of which the cannonading all along the line stopped instantly,—we have no means of knowing.

If letters describing these events were written, they have disappeared. They may have been given away by Governor Lee or some of his descendants, as interesting memorials, by an eye-witness, of this great event in our history.*

*The following letter from General Washington was received by Governor Lee at this time.

Camp near York, October, 1781.

"Dear Sir:—Enclosed I have the honor of transmitting to your Excellency the terms upon which Lord Cornwallis has surrendered the garrisons of York and Gloucester.

"We have not been able yet to get an account of prisoners, ordnance, or stores in the departments; but, from the best general report, there will be (officers included) upwards of seven thousand men, besides seamen; more than seven pieces of brass ordnance, and one hundred of iron, with their stores, as also other movable articles. My present engagements will not allow me to add more than my congratulation on this happy event, and to express the high sense I have of the powerful aid which I have derived from the State of Maryland in complying with every request to the Executive of it. The prisoners will be divided between Winchester, in Virginia, and Frederick in Maryland.

With every sentiment of the most perfect esteem and regard, I have the honor to be your Excellency's most obedient servant.

George Washington.

His Excellency Governor Lee.

See Geneological History of the Lee Family in Maryland and Virginia, by Edward C. Mead, 1871.

In any case McHenry was present at the laying down of arms of the British troops when Cornwallis surrendered, and, after the fatigues of the campaign, shared in the general rejoicing.

A few days later, we find him again taking up the thread of the narrative before the final disbanding of the Continental Army.

Camp before York,
23d October, 1781.

My dear Sir:

The Marquiss, whom I accompanied, returned last night from a conference with Count de Grasse, and today we are preparing for the reduction of the British post at Wilmington. He is commander-in-chief on this occasion, and is to have under him the Maryland troops, the Pennsylvanians, and one Virginia regiment. There may be a sort of naval co-operation, but I cannot say to what extent, as this will be an affair of circumstances. The troops go by water. I have to intreat the Senate, to whom your Excellency will be pleased to commit this request, to permit me to see this operation closed. It is one which, should it be happy, may add greatly to the ease of their seats.

If the enterprise terminates in our favor, and what I fear most is their evacuating the post; if one other can be accomplished, which is not wholly impossible, and if a war does not take place in Germany, which is more than possible; I would almost venture to congratulate your Excellency on a tolerable peace, and that, too, not very distant.

With the utmost respect, I have the honor to be

Your Excellency's most obst.

James McHenry.

His Excellency
Governor Lee.

Camp before York,
27 October, 1781.

My dear Sir:

The capture of Lord Cornwallis has finished our war in Virginia. The army is folding up its tents, and I am preparing to leave it in a few days, to pay to Mrs. Lee and to you my most dear and affectionate respects. The Marquiss perhaps will be of the party, for I fear the enterprise mentioned in the inclosure will not take

place. You will know why it has failed when we meet, and this may be shortly, as Forrest's last letter will not admit of my making another expedition. The fleet sails in two or three days. A small force will be left in the Bay. It is likely the Count Rochambeau's headquarters will remain in this State. The troops of Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia will join Gen. Greene. These last are the out lines.

With the most sincere regard and attachment, I have the honor to be

Your Excellency's most obst.

James McHenry.

His Excellency
Governor Lee.

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