



William Drayton letter to Francis Salvador, 24 July 1776

CHARLES TOWN, July 24, 1776.

MY DEAR SIR:

I am much obliged by your favor of the 19th, which gave me not only a comprehensive view of affairs your way, from the beginning of the war; but, also, the ideas of people touching the discharge of Cunningham and his companions. We apprehended some dissatisfaction might arise; but the act was done, as you very justly thought, with the best intentions, and we hope good consequences will follow. I think I am pretty sure no bad ones can arise on that score, but from the mistaken warmth of our friends. I must applaud your resolution to consider Cunningham " in future merely as an individual, and not as head of any party/ Such is the station he ought ever to hold.

As for the fate of the thirteen white prisoners taken upon the repulse of the Indians speaking as W. H. D. in a private character, I think the public would have received an essential piece of service had they been all instantly hanged. I am not singular in this idea of justice and policy inferior and superior public characters think FO, too.

This day the Experiment, of 50 guns, and the Syren, of 28, got over the bar to join their shattered Commodore. Last Sunday the transports sailed with the troops and Clinton, leaving one brig with about forty Scots, of a regiment called Royal Highland Emigrants . This vessel got on ground. She has fallen into our hands. The men are prisoners the vessel is burnt. I suppose some of the other men-of-war will come over the bar to-morrow. Perhaps all, perhaps not; for of this you know we cannot judge, as we are not of their counsels. The fleet stood off for the Gulf, and the deserters say they are bound for a Northern Long Island, as they are so much in love with the Southern Long Island they have just quitted.

Lee is very clever and very positive. The most positive of the Poetical Fates was, I scarce believe, more positive. Every idea of his must be right, and, of course, every contrary idea in every other person must be wrong; and, contrary to the saying of the wise man, we now find, that even in a multitude of counsellors there is no wisdom, when they entertain different ideas from him, even in cases as plain as my hand. However, the General has rather been unlucky in his ideas sometimes; for we have found salvation from a quarter whence he said none could come; and he has .been served by Continental officers and troops in such sort, as to oblige him to preserve a mortifying silence on the expedition. From the zeal we have, and that only, for the welfare of the common cause, we are content to be silent to him on that point, also. We ought to have taken eighty British troops in the light-house, for we had 320 men to do it with; but the commanding officer kept 245 men and himself, to guard the boats, and sent the others on to look for the enemy and after that sent them orders to retreat, when they were willing to have stormed the light-house. They returned to the boats and begged leave to return to the enemy; he ordered them to embark. Our friend, Capt. Richardson, of Huger s, commanded this little detachment.

No news yet from Philadelphia; every ear is turned that way, anxiously listening for the word, independence. I say, God speed the passage of it. Amen say you.

And now a word to the wise. It is expected you make smooth work as you go that is, you cut up every Indian corn-field, and burn every Indian town and that every Indian taken shall be the slave and property of the taker ; that the nation be extirpated, and the lauds become the property of the public. For my part, I shall never give my voice for a peace with the Cherokee Nation upon any other terms than their removal beyond the mountains.

As for town news, we have none but what is ridiculous, except that a quarrel has arisen between the Vice-President and Col. Pinckney. A challenge passed from the first; the last met him .before the hour; there was no fight, but I have bound over the Colonel, and I have issued a warrant against his Honor, the Vice-President, because he hides himself at home. From what has passed, I begin to be of opinion that his Honor may be lodged in the common jail, because he is not inclined to be bound over. Is not this ridiculous ? I will not say which is in the wrong. I saw the origin of the quarrel it was a trifle ; so much the worse say you. I should not have mentioned this affair; but that what I endeavored to have kept secret is, by a certain obstinacy, become public; and I say so much, that as much maybe fairly represented.

I am much obliged to you for your having begun to feel Norwood's pulse. I hope you will succeed with him. He is another unreasonable man.

As for my friend, Major Williamson, I long to see him Colonel of the regiment now under his orders. In the station of Major, he does infinitely more honor to it than any Colonel it ever had ; of this rank we must say something hereafter. At present the title of Commander in-Chief of the expedition against the Cherokees, with which he is vested, will give him command of any colonel in his army. According to tho military rule, any colonel in his army, though with part, or even the whole of their regiment, are to be considered as volunteers, and they cannot have ;my authority in the camp or army but what is derived from the Major. However, as in all probability the Major may authorize them to command their several detachments under him, I think they may expect to receive their usual pay while in actual service. But this may be depended upon, that any conduct that shall clash with Major Williamson's orders will be carefully examined into.

My paper puts me in mind that I ought to finish my letter, so I beg you will present my compliments to the Major, Capt. Hammond, and any of my acquaintances that you may know to Mr. Hapley, who, perhaps, may be with you ; and, that Victory will conduct your march, is the expectation of, dear sir,

Your most humble and obedient servant,

WM. H. DRAYTON..

Source: *Documentary History of the American Revolution Consisting of Letters and Papers Relating to the Contest for Liberty, Chiefly in South Carolina, from Originals in the Possession of the Editor, and Other Sources, 1776* (<http://www.familytales.org/>).