

4-12-1777

Letter from Henry Laurens to General McIntosh

Henry Laurens

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To see an old Friend in affliction is sufficient to efface from my mind
all little resentments — Your Letter My Dear Sir, of the 27th
March which I reciev'd at Ashpole & read at Curyburg, confirm'd
my apprehensions that you had been made very unhappy by the
late circumstances relative to your Brothers — George more especially,
whether the Reports against those Gentlemen are founded in truth,
cannot at present be determin'd by me, I have neither heard the
charges against them in form, nor their defence, nor do you give me
any Clue to the Cases. If they have acted improperly I am sorry for
them & am particularly affraid on your Account, but in that view, if they
were my own Brothers, I would in the midst of grief be just, & say,
"they must reap from what they have sown." If on the other hand
they are Calumniated, I have no doubt but that in due time & that very
shortly, their Innocence will be manifest, that they will be restor'd to
the good opinion of their Countrymen & reinstal'd in the Rank of the
best Patriots, in the mean time, consciousness of Integrity will ad-
minister balm to their Wounds, confirm a Peace in their own Minds,
& the Love of the dispassionate few, which the World can neither give
nor take away.

I remember to have read & to have felt with
a degree of comfort which can't be describ'd "that an honest heart
is not in the power of dishonest Men — that to break a Mans Peace
there must be some fault in his Mind inconsistent with his Principles,
Malice & injustice have their day like some poor short lived Vermin
that die in shooting their stings — that falsehood is folly, & that Lyars
& Slanders, in the end, hurt none but themselves. — The Devil, adds
this Writer, is the Father of Lies, I fear he will have a right to
dispose of his Children." Let us join in his Charitable Prayer,
"May God have Mercy on them!"

Common Fame & no better authority which to me is no evi-
dence against a private Character, had inform'd me that your Younger
Brother had had a dangerous intercourse with the Enemies of Ame-
rica, that the intelligence descend'd from the Representatives of the
United Colonies in consequence of which he had been closely Imprison'd
& afterwards admitt'd to Bail.

Of Mr. M. Inlosh I had heard many gross but general imputations.

General M. Inlosh,

I remarked in the Paper which you sent me, an insinuation of Crimes of the highest degree — in both Cases, Rash Censure, was opposed by my old maxim, "hear the other side." hitherto, I say, I have heard neither, for the confused sound of words from magnifying Report is not the hearing which obtains my judgement.

That Common Dear, Fame, had also made you a partaker of other Mens guilt. — It was said that even the General himself had not long since been concerned in supplying the Enemy with Provisions, then I did not hesitate to pronounce the Charge "an infamous falshood carrying a Lie in its front." — "this is the work of Party" — "I am not so well acquainted with the other Gentlemen but upon the General's fidelity I will stake my Life!"

You are now, my Dear General, put to the Bar & brought to a severe trial, I flatter my self with an assurance that you will stand the Test & be acquitted with honour, that your every Days conduct will give the Lie to Authors Reports & that your Adversaries who, though seen, perhaps cannot be named, will be ashamed of themselves & of each other. — This however will never happen if you gratify them by despondency, by a resignation of your Commission or by leaving the Country. such steps will rather be deemed a tacit confession of Guilt, the designing ones, who in all like Cases are a few, will exult — the credulous many of whom very honest Men, who have been imposed upon will be confirmed in belief of what before they had only listened to. — the odium upon your Fame will be universal, indelible & descend to your Childrens Children — History cannot exhibit a more hateful figure than is seen in the traits of a Character acting an Enemy to his Country under the Mask of Patriotism — If I could admit a belief of the doctrine of eternal damnation it would be for the Punishment of such Traitors. For Truth's sake, for your own & your Children's sake don't furnish your Enemies with polished proofs of guilt by an indiscreet attempt to avert your Innocence — In a word, you have put your hand to the plough, you have sown

foremost in defence of injured America, you must persevere in your duty, through good Report & evil Report press forward to the Mark, be ready to suffer Martyrdom of Reputation as well as of life in support of the great Cause. Let your Conduct be ~~the~~ the effect of Wisdom & future Pains, hope even while you live, will do you justice. — "The good look with pleasure upon an honest Man struggling under adversity!"

I should have added nothing more on this subject had not one caution which appears necessary to be hinted, this instant occurred to my mind. — Beware of your friends, I mean of some who would appear to be friends, whose business, whose errand I should say, will be to inflame your resentment against your fellow Citizens & Compatriots — such Engines there are employed to divide us — these Men tell us we are abused — they bring in daily Reports modelled & improved by themselves to convince us we are scandalously treated, these Devils, Tans among the Wheat, proceed next to administer advice, abandon say they, such a distracted ungrateful People & enjoy your peace of Mind ~~at~~ in retirement, or enter upon open Combat with such & such, we such in the poison are ruined & they triumph in their success.

An old acquaintance & not the less a friend of yours because he never flattered, being once under the Ban of Party proceeded never the less cheerfully in the course of his several avocations Public & private, his friends would ask him how he could support himself with so much unconcern encircled, as he was, by the most envious & malicious Enemies, because said he, I am not guilty, No Man, though some of them do not want a stomach, dare accuse me. If what they whisper in Concessure true, I should sink, I should be obliged to hide myself, indeed they would not permit me to walk in Public — Now when I meet them, they sink — shall I because a walk or two in little joints have opened that my legs are broken, wear Crutches? No I will walk abroad

to the State, to the Church, to my friend, no individual will attempt to trap
up my Heels & they shall soon give themselves the Lie — I have often heard
him say if he had suffered his Mind to be impressed by Tales of some friends
his Enemies could have gained a conquest in his destruction, on the con-
trary after having failed in every stratagem to destroy him, the most ma-
lignant were the first to offer their hands for reconciliation & foremost in
pretences to do him honour.*

Let us always carry Hearts capable of forgiving injuries against ourselves
but never forgive the Man who betrays his Country — Him, com-
mend to supreme Mercy.

No other parts of your Letter of a more private nature I shall return
brief answers.

If I had been in your place & you in mine I should
have held myself bound by common justice to pay you for so much Rough
Diamond as I had offered to purchase & you had accepted to deliver at a certain
price — a doubtful answer to your acceptance upwards of three Months
after, which time you had lost for providing means for selling or re-
moving such Diamond depending upon me for a confirmation of any own pro-
posal, would not have contented me.

The terms of correspondence which you continue to insist upon are
hardly digestible — I am to be very exact & constant, You are to treat
my Addresses, my requests, my just demands with slight & neglect
to reply when & to what parts you please, four times in five to make
no reply & all this under the protection of "natural Indolence". If after
the most extraordinary repetitions of such attention I discover some sense
of Feeling, I am to be put off with a polite admonition against being "so
soon miss'd". — Your own good understanding General will reflect
upon the equity of these articles — I shall take no further notice of
them, nor should I have taken any if matters the most interesting to
yourself in the Letter before us had not more deeply affected me.

This is not indeed the time to be miss'd nor to be angry
with our friends, I who have often forgiven Enemies will gain no
great conquest over my Passions by assuring you, write or not write,

of

of my continued Friendship, my readiness to serve you, my inclination by every means in my power to allivate your griefs, to promote your Honour & Happiness & of the true regard with which I remain

Dear Sir,

Your affectionate &
Faithful Humble Servant

Henry Laurens.

12th April 1777.

at Wright's Savannah

where I am confined by the gout from mid thigh downward
crawling about the House - if I am able I shall meet Mr. Bailey
at Savannah on Tuesday - otherwise he will come here in order
to adjust my Alabama affairs in the best manner I can.
Then return to Charles Town & prepare for my intended Journey
to Philadelphia which I shall ^{not} be able to begin before the 1st June

cut

General A. Ingham.

Henry Lawson
Esq. 12th April '77

[Handwritten signature]