

Letters of
Thomas Nelson

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of
Thomas Nelson

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No.

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THESE LETTERS, from the pen of Governor THOMAS NELSON, JR., relate to the siege of Yorktown, the surrender of Lord Cornwallis, and the Naval and Military movements which resulted in that decisive triumph of the Continental arms, and are now published for the first time.

THE VIRGINIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY are gratified to have this opportunity of quickening the public interest in Governor Nelson, whose example of self-sacrificing patriotism will outlast the bronze which commemorates his name.



LETTERS.

Thos. Nelson, Jr., B. G. to Major Dick.

NOTHING has offered since I last wrote, which renders it necessary to vary the orders then given. It was my wish to have collected the troops on this side of James River to one point, that if any opportunity presented itself of gaining an advantage of the enemy, we might have seized it to the best effect. For this reason I should this night have marched the troops here towards your station, but that this would have thrown our whole force too far into y^e rear of the enemy, to give any protection to the lower country, should the enemy embark in any short time, which I think not improbable. If they should not, I shall to-morrow morning draw closer to them by the way of Charles City Court House, and wish you to keep as near them as you prudently can. In case of their embarkation and going down the River, you will march your troops by the most direct

Holt-
Forge,
Jan'y 8th.
1781.
after 6 P.M

direct Route towards Williamsburg. I am, dear
Sir,

Your very h'ble fervant,

Gov'r Nelson to the Marquis de la Fayette.

SIR:

Richmond
June 28th,
1781.

In consequence of your first requisition of Militia to join Gen. Wayne and to proceed to So. Caro., the executive directed a seventh part of the Militia of several counties nearest the borders of Carolina, to rendezvous immediately—these it was supposed would amount to about 1000 or 1200 men. Afterwards, when you desired the number to be augmented to 2000, the same counties were called on to increase their numbers to one fourth, w'ch would produce more than you required; no part of the British army having gone southwardly, as was apprehended when the latter requisition was made, a doubt has arisen whether you may now think 2000 men necessary for the Southern service. What renders the sending a greater number of men on this expedition, than the service absolutely requires, a matter of more moment than it otherwise would be, is the scarcity of Public Arms, and the probability there is, that we shall want as many as we can collect
in

in other quarters. The executive wish to have your sentiments on this subject.

I am, &c.

Gov'r Nelson to the Count De Grasse.

SIR:

The arrival of his most Christian Majesty's fleet under your command in Chesapeake Bay, was yesterday announced to me while in the Marquis de la Fayette's camp. I take the earliest opportunity of congratulating you on your safe arrival, and of acknowledging this signal proof of the attention of our very great and generous ally, and the alacrity with which you, Sir, and the other officers of this fleet and army, execute his intentions in our favour. An armament so powerful and competent to every purpose, will not only give a fortunate turn to our Military operations, but will convince the incredulous and disaffected, who may still lurk amongst us, that his most Christian Majesty is, both sincerely determined, and fully able, to support the American United States, in vindicating their rights and maintaining their independence. It will be my greatest happiness to contribute every thing in my power towards the speedy and successful accomplishment of the object we have in view, and to render the service in this State agreeable to the officers and
men

Richmond
Sept 12th
1781.

men of his most Christian Majesty's Fleet and Army.

Gov'r Nelson to the President of Congress.

SIR:

Richmond
Sept'r 21,
1781.

It is with great pleasure I inform you of the arrival of the Count De Graffe, in Chesapeake Bay, with a very powerful armament. We are making every exertion to improve this favorable opportunity of striking a blow, which will not only, for the present, relieve this State from the ravages of war, but will have the strongest tendency to bring our just contest to a speedy and happy conclusion.

I am, &c.,

Gov'r Nelson to Gov'r Lee (of Maryland).

SIR:

Richmond
Sept'r 21,
1781.

On the 31st of August, the French Fleet, commanded by the Count De Graffe, consisting of 28 ships of the line and six Frigates, with 3,000 land Forces, arrived in Chesapeake Bay. They have made such dispositions as will prevent the British army, now at York, from crossing James River below the Falls, should they attempt

attempt to eſcape to the ſouthward, and I truſt we ſhall, in conjunction with the French Troops, be able to oppoſe to them ſuch a Force as will keep them from penetrating weſterly, in order to croſs the country higher up. In all human Probability, Lord Cornwallis has nearly finiſhed his career, and will ſhortly receive his reward. We are making the greateſt exertions to procure abundant and permanent ſupplies of Proviſions for the fleet of our Allies and our combined forces, and although our proſpects are good, yet, ſo anxious am I that there ſhould be no deficiency on this ſcore, I wiſh us to have ſome other dependence than the ſupplies of this State. Flour is an article which we may probably moſt want, and particularly for the preſent, and it is one with which your State, I imagine, can eaſily and plentifully furniſh us. I would therefore take the liberty of recommending it to your conſideration, whether it will not be adviſable to have conſiderable quantities of it immediately ſent down the Bay.

I am, Sir, with the greateſt eſteem and reſpect,

Your mo. obed't and very hum. ſerv't.

Gov'r

Gov'r Nelson to Capt. Pierce, Smithfield.

SIR:

Richmond
Sept'r 2d,
1781.

The armament that has lately arrived to our assistance will require large supplies of Vegetables and Vinegar, both which articles used to be produced in great abundance in your and the adjacent counties. Your known zeal for your country's welfare has induced me to take the liberty of requesting your aid in procuring these articles. If you wish a supply of money for this purpose, you shall be furnished with it upon application. Hog Island will be a proper place to convey the things to, from whence they will be taken by the ships, unless you should find it more convenient to convey them from Smithfield by water; which, I imagine, might be done with safety at this time.

Gov'r Nelson to John Brown, Esq., Commissary-General.

SIR:

Richmond
Sept'r 2d,
1781.

The very large supplies of provisions necessary for the armanent lately arrived, and for the troops expected from the Northward, require the most vigorous and unremitting exertions. For the northern troops, your attention must

mult be immediately turned towards Alexandria, from thence, through that neck of land to Fredericksburg, to Gloster and the Marquis' camp. For the French troops, the supplies may most easily be drawn from James River and its waters. This will be an extensive business, and will demand many able and active men to execute it. Disappointment will be attended with the most fatal consequences.

I have written to the County Lieutenants to urge the Commissioners to alacrity in their department, and also to procure all the Waggons that they possibly can. Let me recommend to you again the closest application towards furnishing an immediate supply.

I am, &c.,

Gov'r Nelson to Mr. Picree.

SIR:

I am this moment informed, by the hon'ble Major-General Marquis la Fayette, that the French Troops are landing at James Town. I desire you will immediately repair thither, and adopt every measure in your power to supply them with whatever they may want, that comes within your department.

Richmond
Sept's 21.
1781.
8 o'clock
P. M.

Gov'r Nelson to Gov'r Burke,

SIR:

Richmond
Sep^r 3^d,
1781.

Your letter of the 15th of the laſt month was received here at a time when I was on a viſit to camp, which detained me till the day before yeſterday. At preſent, I ſhall beg leave to wave any anſwer to its contents, but haſten to inform you of an event which will give you more pleaſure than a thouſand obſervations on the matters which lately engaged our attentions. The Count De Graffe arrived in our Bay three days ago with a Fleet of 28 ſhips of the line and ſix frigates, together with three thouſand land forces. By a letter from the Marquis la Fayette, received laſt night, I am informed that the French troops had begun to land at James Town. This friendly armament is ſo formidable that, I flatter myſelf, no hoſtile one can arrive which will venture to attack them, or be able to fnatch from us our prey. Your own feelings on this Occaſion will enable you to judge of ours. As we ought to provide againſt every thing which can poſſibly happen to difappoint our high wrought expectations, will it not be well for you to keep a watchful eye on the movements of the Southern foe, as, I believe, you have nothing to apprehend from this quarter? The enemy will not loſe ſuch an army as Cornwallis' without the greateſt exertions, on all ſides. But what raiſes our Hopes and Joys to the moſt exalted Pitch, and which I have reſerved

ferred to the last, to crown the political Feast which this letter will afford you, is a movement of our great general, who, on the 27th of the last month, was at Chatham, with all the French troops of the Northern Army, and a body of Continentals, on his march for Virginia.

Gov'r Nelson to Lord Cornwallis.

MY LORD:

From the assurance given me in a letter I received from you of Aug't 5th, that all such persons as I described Messrs. Archer and Ryall to be, were ordered to be released, I rested satisfied that those gentlemen had obtained their liberty. But I am just informed that they are still in confinement on board of one of your Lordship's Prison Ships; which, from your letter, I must suppose to be a circumstance with which you are not acquainted. I am, therefore, again to desire your attention to these gentlemen, and assure myself that you will order them to be released.

I am your Lordship's mo. obed't and
mo. hum. serv't,

Gov'r

Gov'r Nelson to Thos. Newton, Jr., Esqr.

SIR:

Richmond
Sept'r 4th,
1781.

It appearing to the Executive a matter of consequence that the French Fleet be plentifully supplied with many articles of provisions, such as fresh meats and vegetables, which may be procured in the counties contiguous to the Bay; from the experience I have had of your abilities in transacting any business committed to you, and of your zeal for the interest of your country, I am induced to wish that you would undertake this matter and furnish them with whatever necessaries they may require, and if such supplies are not attainable by the common methods of purchase, you are hereby authorized to procure them by Imprefs.

I am, &c.,

Gov'r Nelson to Gen'l Greene.

SIR:

Richmond
Sept'r 5th,
'81.

The Count De Grasse, with 28 ships of the line, six Frigates, and three thousand land Forces arrived last week in Chesapeake Bay. The troops are landed, and have, I expect, formed a junction with the Marquis, about Wm'burg. The enemy have made no movement which I have heard of since this event, but continue in York, strengthening their Post. We have called out

out a very large Body of our Militia, which, when added to the forces already in camp, will enable us clofely to inveft York. I have had a letter from his Excellency Gen'l Washington, dated at Chatham on the 27th of laft month, wherein he informs me that he is on his march for this State with all the French troops of the Northern Army and a considerable body of Continentals. This movement, in all human probability, ensures us fuccels in this quarter. But, notwithstanding the very flattering prospect here, I feel an uneafinefs when I confider that your fituation may not be fo agreeable. It is, I think, to be expected that the enemy you have to deal with will exert themfelves at this Critical time, and the fuperiority, I fear, they poffels, gives room for apprehenfions. I have received no letter from you fince the 15th of July, fo that I know nothing more of the Southern tranfactions between that time and this, than what I have learnt from common report. It would give me much fatisfaction to have information of a more authentic nature.



*Gov'r Nelson to the Hon'ble Robert Morris, Esq.,
Superintendent of Finance.*

SIR:

Richmond
Sept'r 5th,
1781.

Your letters of July 16th and Aug't 23rd, with a copy of July 25, the Original of which has not been received, are all come to hand. At present, I can do little more than acknowledge the receipt of them, but shall lose no time in paying that attention to their contents which their importance requires. A person has been for some time employed in liquidating the accounts between the United States and this State; another is engaged in settling the accounts of the Specific supplies furnished by this State. Both of these, as soon as they are finished, shall be transmitted to you. In general, I may observe that this State has far exceeded the requisitions of Congress in its advance of most of the Specific supplies. The Assembly of this State meets on the first day of October. If you can be enabled to execute the duties of your office, agreeably to your wishes, I am persuaded America will feel the good effects of it; and I hope you will believe that private Friendship, as well as regard for the Public Welfare, will prompt me to lend you every assistance which my situation and abilities give me the power of furnishing.

I am, &c.,

By

*By his Excellency Thomas Nelson, Judge, Esq.,
Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia.*

ORIGINAL PROCLAMATION.

Whereas the exportation of provisions will be attended with manifest injury to this State, I have thought proper, by and with the advice and consent of the Council of State, to issue this my Proclamation for laying an embargo on provisions, viz: on all beef, pork, bacon, wheat, Indian corn, pease, or other grain, or flour, or meal, made of the same, to continue until it shall be annulled by proper authority. And I do hereby strictly prohibit all mariners, masters and commanders of vessels, and all persons whatsoever, within this State, from loading on board any vessel for exportation, and from exporting all or any of the above species of provisions, by land or by water, from the date hereof until this proclamation shall be repealed, under pain of incurring the penalties inflicted by the Act of Assembly entitled an Act to empower the Governor and Council to lay an embargo for a limited time, except as in the said Act is excepted. And I do hereby strictly charge and command all Naval officers, and others in their respective departments, to exert their best endeavours to the end that this Embargo be strictly observed.

Given under my hand, and the seal of the Commonwealth, at Richmond, this 5th day of Septem'r, 1781. THOS. NELSON, JR.

Gov'r

Gov'r Nelson to the Absent Members of Council.

R. Hanson
S. 1st. 5th.
1781. The operations that will take place in consequence of the Arrival of a French Armament, induce me to take command of the Militia that are called out.

I wish, at the same time, the Executive may proceed in the business before them, to effect which it will be necessary for you to attend, as I know it will give satisfaction to the Gentlemen present to have as full a board as possible.

I am, &c.,

[Copy sent to each absent member of Council.]

Gov'r Nelson to Gov'r Burke (of N. C.).

SIR:

W. G. Gung
S. 1st. 10th.
1781. I arrived here this day. Part of our troops are below, within eight miles of York. The French and most of the Continental troops lie still a mile or two above. Our force is daily growing Stronger, and I flatter myself we shall very soon circumscribe Cornwallis within narrower limits than he has lately been accustomed to. We have had information of the arrival of the Northern Troops, under his Excellency Gen'l Washington, at the Head of Elk. They were to come down by water, and may be every minute expected. Last week a British Fleet appeared

appeared off our Capes, which drew out the Count De Graffe with the greater part of his Fleet. It is said they engaged, and that after a smart conflict the Britons fled, and were pursued by the French. They have not yet returned, nor have we heard any thing from them which can be depended on, but from their superiority our hopes are very high. I shall continue here until the fate of York is determined, unless the meeting of our Assembly obliges me sooner to leave the Field, and I expect to have the pleasure of communicating to you, from time to time, events of the most agreeable nature.

Gov'r Nelson to Col. Blunt.

SIR:

Your letter of yesterday, by Major Lucas, W'm-burg,
Sept'r 12th
1781. is just received. The alacrity with which the Militia is turning out on this Occasion, gives me great pleasure. On acc't of provisions, it is necessary that you continue at your present post till farther orders.

I am, &c.,

Gov'r Nelson to Major Boyce.

SIR:

W^msb^urg
Sept. 12th,
1781.

Your letter to the Marquis Lafayette, dated yesterday, has been referred to me. Until I can give it proper attention, and till farther orders, You will Keep Dr. Campbell in Custody.

I am, Sir, Your

Obed't h'ble Serv't.

*Gov'r Nelson to Col. Anthony Thornton, Jr.,
Caroline.*

SIR:

W^msb^urg
Sept'r 12th
1781.

A large body of troops being expected in a few days down the Bay, under his excellency Gen'l Washington, which will probably land in Gloucester, I beg that you will have all the Flour you can procure at Port Royall, or in any part of Caroline or the adjacent country, sent in Veffels round into Piankatank with all possible dispatch. I have taken the liberty of giving you this trouble from a conviction that your zeal for your Country's Good will incline you to undertake a bufiness so serviceable to it, and that your influence will enable you to execute it with the greatest success.

I am, Sir,

Your mo. Obed't and very hum.,

Gov'r

Gov'r Nelson to Col. Wells.

SIR:

The great want of Flour and Meal in the Army requires that every possible measure be adopted to procure supplies, and that persons of influence and activity engage in this business. I therefore request, Sir, that you will undertake to procure these articles in the Isle of Wight and the neighbouring counties, where your exertions, I am persuaded, will have great effect. You will take possession of Mills proper for your purpose, and you may assure the people that the Corn they advance on this occasion shall, if they require it, be replaced. You will also take what spirits you can meet with for the use of the Army; vinegar, too, is much wanted, and Captain Pierce, of Smithfield, has been applied to to provide it. To him you will be pleased to make application for what he has gotten, and you will, besides, endeavour to procure elsewhere.

I am, &c.

Gov'r Nelson to Capt. Callender.

SIR:

I request that you will immediately proceed up James and Appomattox Rivers, and give your assistance to the Commissaries and persons employed in procuring and sending provisions

to

to the Army. You will push down, with the utmost dispatch, all vessels you meet with which are loaded, and impress such vessels and their crews as are not engaged in the public service.

I am, &c.,

Gov'r Nelson to David Ross, Esq.

SIR:

W'msbu'g
Sept'r 12th
1781.

The great distress the Army is now suffering from the want of Flour and Meal induces me to write to you, although I am persuaded you are exerting yourself in this business. Petersburg, I believe, promises fairest for an immediate supply, and thither I would beg you to turn your attention, unless you know of some place more likely to satisfy our wants. You will be good enough to continue your Assistance to the Commissary, which I know will be of the greatest service to him, and consequently to the Country.

I am, &c.,

Gov'r Nelson to Col. Davies.

SIR:

W'msbu'g
Sept'r 12th
1781.

Since my arrival in camp, I have understood that there is not a sufficient number of intrenching Tools collected, nor is there a prospect of procuring them near this place. I am therefore

therefore to desire that you will give orders to have all the tools fit for this purpose, which are to be met with in Richmond or elsewhere within your reach, taken and sent down. Not a grain of Flour has yet arrived from above, nor is there at present a grain of meal in Camp. The greatest Distress prevails on this account, and how we are to remedy it in time I Know not. I beg of you to urge the persons engaged in this Business to the utmost Industry and Dispatch. Water Carriage from Richmond is too tedious to afford the relief we want. For immediate use, some ought to be sent by Land if possible.

Governor Nelson to Mr. Pierce (Com'y-General).

I arrived yesterday in Camp, and found the greatest distress prevailing for want of Flour and Meal. The Vessel you dispatched from Richmond is not yet got down. This navigation is too uncertain and tedious for immediate purposes. Land Carriage would best answer them, if it is possible to make use of it. I am satisfied you will do everything in your power to send on supplies, and never were your exertions more necessary. Is there not Flour to be had at Petersburg, whence it could be brought here in a short time?

W'msburg
Sept'r 12th
1781.

What adds to the Distress is, that the Mills in
this

this part of the Country have not water to grind the corn, which can be collected.

I am, &c.,

Any waggons which will bring Flour to navigation or to Camp shall be immediately discharged.

Gov'r Nelson to Colonel Lewis.

SIR:

W'msb'rg
Sept'r 13th
1781.

For the troops under your command you will endeavour to procure Provisions from the Inhabitants in your neighbourhood, and you may assure them they shall have what they furnish replaced, if they require it.

I am, Sir,

Y'r Mo. Ob. Servant.

Governor Nelson to Col. Taylor.

SIR:

W'msb'rg
Sept'r 13th
1781.

Your letter to the Marquis la Fayette, respecting the Flag Vessel at Urbanna, was this day referred to me. I cannot at present determine in what manner it will be proper to dispose of it, but think the negroes ought to be landed, and that due attention may be paid to their situation; and, the necessary precautions being

being taken that they be returned or accounted for when required, other things must remain as they were when you wrote, until further orders.

Gov'r Nelson to Hon'ble David Jamieson, Lieut.-Governor,

STR:

There is at present a scarcity of salt in Camp, and from the great consumption of fresh Meat, a large quantity will be required. I must, therefore, beg that you will give attention to this matter, and procure as much as you can. I have been informed that a Vessel lately arrived at Richmond with Salt, which probably is still attainable. The two armies remain in the same situation as when I last wrote.

I am,

Gov'r Nelson to Gen'l Lawson,

STR:

There are several Horses in Captain Nelson's Corps that belong to the public, which will be of Service to the French. These horses, if they have not been appraised, must be valued by two Gentlemen of your Camp, and a return made of them. The men who came down are
upon

Winnburg
Sept'r 13th
1781.

Winnburg
Sept'r 13th
1781.

upon a regular tour of Duty, and cannot be discharged until that is expired. Such of them as are on the impressed horses must be annexed to the Infantry of their county. Those who are mounted on their own horses, and are armed with swords, will be of service as dragoons, and may draw forage.

I am,

Gov'r Nelson to the County Lieutenants of Fairfax, Prince Wm., Stafford, Spotsylvania, Caroline, Hanover and New Kent.

SIR:

W'msborg
Sept'r 13th
1781.

The march of his excellency, Gen'l Washington, with his troops by land, makes it necessary that the Roads he is to pass be put into the best order. This you will immediately have done in your County.

Governor Nelson to Governor Burke.

SIR:

W'msborg
Sept'r 13th
1781.

Since I last wrote to you no movement has been made by either Army. Much of our attention, indeed, has been given to the means of subsisting so large a force, and a difficult task
it

it has been to keep it in being for some days past. Our difficulties on this account seem now diminishing, but there still remain apprehensions that we shall not be altogether free from these embarrassments, unless our neighbouring States lend us some assistance. From your State we would wish to obtain salt and Beef, of which there will be a great consumption, this country at present affording very little salted provisions.

I am, &c.,

Governor Nelson to Col. Innes.

SIR:

It is probable that some salt may be procured for public use in the County of Gloucester. The army is at present much in want of it, and you will oblige me if you will have what is to be had collected and secured. With respect to military operations on the North Side of York River, they must be left to your own judgment. You will, however, be pleased to communicate to me every event of any importance, and you may rest assured that equal attention shall be paid to the Militia on both sides of the River. The necessary appointments in the Medical departments, or others in your command, you will make.

I am, &c.,

Governor Nelson to Col. William Davies.

SIR:

W^msburg
Sept^r 14th
1781.

His Excellency Gen^l Washington arrived here between four and five O'clock this afternoon. The first division of his Army is coming down the Bay, and is every moment expected. Our operations will now grow very serious, and it will be incumbent on us to exert ourselves that there may be no want of Ammunition. I need not urge you to attend to this matter. I must again beg leave to recommend what I have so often mentioned, that every means be made use of to get Waggon^s in the service.

I am, Sir, Yr. Mo. Ob. servant,

Gov^r Nelson to John Pierce.

SIR:

W^msburg
Sept^r 14th
1781.

His Excellency Gen^l Washington is just arrived, and the first division of his Army is every moment expected. The Provisions in Camp are scarcely sufficient to subsist the present Army for three days longer, and should the wished for reinforcement arrive before a fresh supply of provisions, Flour, at least, is received, it gives me Pain to think of the Situation we shall be in. Let me intreat you, therefore, to leave nothing untried which promises the smallest relief to us. Not only great quantities of
Flour

Flour, but also Beef, will be wanted. All applications with respect to supplies of Provisions are made to me, and the apprehensions I am under lest there should be a deficiency, create a perpetual uneasiness. Write Often and as briefly as you please your Certainties and Prospects, that I may Know our dependence.

I am,

Gov'r Nelson to Hon'ble D. Jameson.

SIR:

His Excellency Gen'l Washington arrived here about two hours ago. The first division of his Army is coming down the Bay, and may be expected every moment. A very little time now will determine the fate of York, and with it probably that of the Continent. But what exertions will it require to subsist properly so great an Army? I feel the utmost anxiety on this account, and cannot forbear, though I am persuaded it is needless, pressing you to urge to the greatest and most unremitting activity and industry every Officer within your reach, whose business it is to provide forage or provisions for the Army. Beef, Flour, Corn, and the Means of Transportation, should be principal objects of attention, and the country cannot censure any encouragement which is given to those who will
lend

W'msb'g
Sept'r 14th
1781.
6 o'clk PM

lend their aid on this occasion. His Excellency appears to be in good health and Spirits.

I am, Sir, Your Most obedient
and very H'ble s^rv't,

Gov'r Nelson to Ralph Wormley, Jr.

SIR:

W^msburg
Sept^r 14th
1781.

Your letter and Petition were delivered to me the day before yesterday. Col. Taylor has received orders to permit the negroes to be landed, upon condition that they be delivered up when demanded. The other articles are to be detained with the flag until further orders.

I am, Sir, Your Obed. Servant,

R. A., Secretary, to Col. Sir John Peyton.

SIR:

W^msburg
Sept^r 14th
1781.

As the large Force now collecting about this place requires every exertion to be made for their subsistence, The Governor begs the favour of you to procure, for the use of the Army, as much Beef and Salt in your County as it can furnish without distressing the people. The necessities of the Service oblige him to make these applications to Gentlemen of the greatest influence in their respective parts of the Country.

By order of his Excellency the Governor.

Governor

Governor Nelson to Charles Lewis.

SIR:

I will be obliged to you if you will undertake the collecting of Spades, Axes, Hatchets, Shovels and hilling Hoes, and you are hereby empowered to take, for the public use, all you can find in the town or adjacent country. You will Keep an account of the tools you receive from each person, so that they may be returned when the service no longer requires them. You are also empowered to impress negroes to bring the tools to such place or places as you shall think it convenient to have them collected at.

W'msburg
Sept'r 15th
1781.

Governor Nelson to Col. Kenner.

SIR:

The rum mentioned in your letter cannot be impressed for our use, as it belongs to the French Fleet. I desire you will be particularly careful to secure it from damage, and give every assistance to the Captain that is in your power. The Admiral will no doubt fend up for it immediately.

W'msburg
Sept'r 15th
1781.

If it is necessary, order your Militia out to protect it.

Gov'r

Gov'r Nelson to Col. Davies.

SIR:

W^msburg
 Sept^r 16th
 1781.
 10 o'clock
 A. M.

Yours of the 13th inst. is just received. I have written more than once to you since my arrival here, and mentioned the Particulars, wherein I wish'd for your best endeavours. The procuring of Waggon's is a matter of so much importance that I cannot help again recommending it to your attention. You will also oblige me by sending a copy of the late Militia Law. Our Army has not yet begun to operate, but continues nearly in the same position as I found it. The Count De Graffe has returned from pursuing the British Fleet. He has taken two Frigates, and is joined by the Rhode Island Fleet. In the latter came 600 Land troops. Permit me once more to desire that you will press those whose business it is, to send on provisions with all possible expedition. I have just received information that 3,000 of the Northern Army are Come into James River.

Gov'r Nelson to Lieut. Gunaway.

SIR:

W^msburg
 Sept^r 16th
 1781.

So great a number of horses are required for the present service, that every expedient we can adopt will scarcely be sufficient to answer the Demand. It is my wish, therefore, that you order down all the horses taken from or left by the

the Enemy which are in the Commissioners or quarter Master's Hands: as these Horses are already out of the Proprietor's possession, this application of them will be least felt by the People. The supplies of Flour, &c., come in but slowly, so that I am still full of Anxiety on this Acc't. The Count De Graffe has returned and increased his fleet with two British Frigates, While he was in chace the Rhode Island Fleet, fortunately, got in. This latter has brought upwards of Six hundred land forces, and many implements for a siege. No movement has yet been made by our Army. It is said the Enemy are out as high as the half way house, in Force, this morning.

Gov'r Nelson to Hon'l D. Jameson.

SIR:

The want of Forage and Spirits begin to be very sensibly felt in the Army, the Country around here being exhausted to a degree that is extremely distressing to the inhabitants. Forage for 5,000 (thousand) horses will be wanted. You will inform me where the Public stores are, or where it is most probable they can be procured. Military Matters remain as when I last wrote.

Wmsburg
Sept'r 18th
1781.

I am, &c.

Gov'r

Gov'r Nelson to Col. Wm. Davies.

W'msбург
Sept'r 18th
1781.

SIR: In consequence of your letter, Capt. Ed-
dins waits upon you for the recruiting money.

I am, Sir, Your Obed. h'ble Serv't.

Not a tittle of news since the last letter.

Governor Nelson to Lord Cornwallis.

W'msбург
Sept'r 18th
1781.

MY LORD: The officers of the Virginia Line
who contracted the debts in Charlestown, for the
payment of Which we are now sending To-
bacco, are desirous that Lieutenant Colonel
Wallace, one of their number, and still a Pris-
oner on Parole, be permitted to go in the Flag,
his knowledge of these contracts qualifying him,
better than any person who is a stranger to
them, to settle them in a just and satisfactory
manner. If your Lordship thinks proper to
grant this permission, you will be pleased to en-
close to me a passport for him.

I am informed that Major Arthur Dickinon,
of the York County Militia, is in close confine-
ment in your Provost. Your lordship will
oblige me by acquainting me with the reason of
his being treated in this rigorous manner.

I am Your Lordship's

Obed't and Very h'ble Serv't.

Governor

Governor Nelson to Col. Davies.

SIR:

Yours of the 15th I received last night. ^{W'msb'rg} ^{Sept'r 19th} ^{1781.}
 Your propofal to have a magazine established at Shirley is certainly a good one, and ought to have more attention paid to it than mere approbation. The navigation above can be much more eafily and expeditiously performed by fmall craft than by large Veffels; Which latter, again, will be more advantageoufly employed in the lower navigation. It is my wifh, therefore, that you urge this matter in the Strongeft terms to Major Claiborne and Mr. Pierce.

It is neceffary when men fo openly, on fuch interefting occafions, dare to difobey the orders of Government, as in the inftance of the Henrico Militia, that fure punifhment fhould await their conduct. Whatever method you fhall find beft to answer this purpofe, will be approved of by me. The behaviour of Colonel * * * is in the higheft degree reprehenfible, and I fhall take that notice of it which it deferves, and which, I truft, will deter him and others from like practices in future. The troops under Col. Gaskins are fo fhamefully deficient in clothing that I muft request of you to have any clothes which are ready immediately fent on; an Officer will go up to receive them.

I am, Sir, Your Mo. Ob. Servant.

P. S.—Pleafe to fend a copy of the provifion Law.

Gov'r Nelson to Col. Davies.

SIR:

W'msb'rg
Sept'r 23^d
1781.

Since I wrote to you on the 19th, I have received yours of the 17th and 19th—the former including a return of Military Stores, the latter a copy of the Militia Law. I shall write to Mr. Dick and direct him to make regular returns of the Arms &c. at the Fredericksburg gun factory, which he ought to have done without my orders. Such horses as are unfit for service, or such as cannot speedily be made so, I think it will be most advisable to sell, Keeping particular descriptions of them, that justice may be done their owners, if they can be found. All the powder ought to be purchased that can be met with, and a supply of cartridges is immediately wanted, we being under the necessity of borrowing from the Park to comply with the requisitions from Gloucester. If I can hear of a Tinman, I will endeavour to engage and send him up to you. We still remain as distant from the enemy as when I last wrote. We have been waiting for reinforcements and necessaries for carrying on a siege, and struggling with the difficulties of subsisting the Army. It will be proper to get from Major Claiborne a return of the Horses delivered to him, a copy of which you will be pleased to transmit to me.

I am, Sir, Your Obed.
and Very h'ble Servant.

Gov'r

Gov'r Nelson to

SIR:

You will be pleased, with the Veffels committed to your charge for the purpose of bringing supplies to the Army, to proceed up Potowmack River, to take in whatever shall be collected at those, or any other ports on James or Appomattox Rivers. At Richmond, you will apply to Mr. Pearce, commissary-General. At Petersburg, to Mr. Yarborough; and these Gentlemen, and their Assitants, are hereby required to deliver to you all the supplies they have procured on the Aforefaid Rivers. You are hereby empowered to impress any hands you shall have any occasion for, in navigating, loading, or unloading your Veffels, and all other things necessary for the service you are engaged in.

W^msbu^{rg}
Sept^r 25th
1781.

I am, Sir, your Mo. Ob. Servant.

Gov'r Nelson to Buller Claiborne.

SIR:

You will please to Stop all veffels coming down either of the Branches of York River, with provisions of any kind Whatever, at Frayfer's and at Ruffin's Ferry, and, if possible, have them flored at those places, the danger attending Veffels coming lower down the River, at this time, being infinitely too great to hazard the loss of any others, three having been captured by the enemy, this day.

W^msbu^{rg}
Sept. 25th,
1781.

Gov'r

Gov'r Nelson to Commodore Barron.

SIR:

W'msburg
Sept'r 25th
1781.

As we are in great want of your assistance, I should be glad to see you, without loss of time, in W'msburg, where business of consequence awaits your arrival.

Gov'r Nelson to Col. Jno. S. Wills.

SIR:

W'msburg
Sept'r 25th
1781.

Should you find it necessary to Keep Mackay's Mills going, and that it cannot be done without drawing off the water from the Mills above on the same Streams, You are hereby authorized and empowered so to do, the public service absolutely requiring that no obstruction be given to the work to be carried [on] at the said mills. You will send Peter Hernon, under a guard, to me, at this place.

Given under my hand, at Williamsburg, this twenty-fifth day of Sept., 1781.

Gov'r Nelson to Lord Cornwallis.

MY LORD:

W'msburg
Sept'r 25th
1781.

Many of the former inhabitants of York having applied to me for a flag to bring out their effects, Your Lordship will do me the favor

favor to inform me whether it will be agreeable to you to allow them this liberty: and, if it is, at what time it will be most proper for their Waggon &c. to attend, for this purpose. I must also request that your Lordship will inform me of the reason of Doctor Griffin's confinement on board of one of your Prison Ships.

I have the honour to be, &c.

If your Lordship will permit such of the inhabitants as are now in York to come out, with their effects, Waggon will be sent, at the same time, for their use.

David Jameson to Governor Nelson.

We are very sorry to inform you, that in those parts of the Country where Agents are employed to purchase provisions for the French Fleet and Army, our Commissaries or Commissioners can procure no supplies. The people withhold their Wheat, in hope of receiving a present payment in Specie. It is absolutely necessary something should be done, or our Army will be starved. We should have written to you yesterday, on receiving the letters and extracts now enclosed to you, but Mr. Rofs, who has had this matter in contemplation, is out of Town. Was he here, we should propose to him to go immediately to camp, and, after conferring with

In Council
Sept'r 26th
1781.

with you, to make application to the Superintendent or director of those agents, fully persuaded he can strike out some mode of procuring the necessary supplies for both Armies and Fleet, that will be agreeable to all parties. Seeing the necessity of something to be immediately done, we trouble you with this letter, that you may pave the way for Mr. Ross, to whom we have sent an express, and hope he will be with you in a short time after your receipt of this. With the greatest esteem, I have the honour to be,

Your Exc'y's mo. Ob. Serv't.

Gov'r Nelson to Col. Richard Morris.

SIR:

Wmsburg
Sept'r 26th
1781.

The great difficulty of supplying the Army with Provisions, and the fatal consequences which may attend a scarcity of them, oblige me to request, in the most earnest manner, that you will immediately come down to this place and lend us your assistance in this way. I know your aversion from engaging in Public Affairs, but so important is the Occasion, and so soon, I hope, will the necessity of extraordinary aid be over, that, I flatter myself, your regard for the public Welfare will prevail over your reluctance to engage in this business, in which, I am persuaded, you will be in the highest degree useful.

I am, &c.

Gov'r

Gov'r Nelson to Count De Grasse.

SIR:

I have the honor to inform your Excellency, that the Flags of Truce, which were defined to Charlestown, and which, I have been informed, have been detained by your Excellency's Orders, were properly authorized by Government, to carry Tobacco thither, for the purpose of discharging the debts contracted by our Officers, while in captivity there, but, as political reasons in the present conjuncture may render their departure highly improper, for some time, I shall order them to return to their respective stations.

I have the honor to be, with the most perfect sentiments of Esteem and Respect, Sir, Your Excellency's most Obed. and most

Hum'le Serv't,

Gov'r Nelson to Col. Thomas Newton.

SIR:

I wrote to you on the 19th, in answer to yours of the 17th. Should you be able to collect more necessaries than are requisite for the use of the Fleet, you will please to send them up for the use of the Army. I must, however, recommend to your attention the Ships which lie in James River, some of which are as high up as Warroquick Bay.

I am, &c.

Gov'r

W^msburg
Sept'r 27th
1781.

W^msburg
Sept'r 27th
1781.

Governor Nelson to Mr. John Pierce.

SIR:

W^mnsburg
Sept'r 27th
1781.

It is some time since I heard from you. As the emergencies of the Army are, at this time, very considerable, you will use your utmost efforts in hurrying down Cattle and whatever other provisions you have collected for the use of the Army—Observing that they are to be sent down on the north side of James River, to obviate the inconveniences of transporting them over the River at this place.

I am, Sir, &c.

Gov'r Nelson to Hon'le D. Jameson.

SIR:

W^mnsburg
Sept'r 27th
1781.

Yours of the 22d did not reach me till yesterday. The draft of Major Lintot, if I ever did know anything of it, has entirely escaped my memory. But, in our present situation, it is certainly out of our power to answer drafts of this nature and amount. In a letter received yesterday, from Col. Davies, he has very justly represented the bad consequences of the present mode of settling acc'ts in the Auditor's office.

The People of the Country being obliged to receive Prices so inadequate to their property and services, will undoubtedly decline serving the
the

the Public, as far as it is in their power to avoid it. My opinion is, that they should receive the Depreciation current at the time of settling their accounts, and I look upon this as a measure which not only justice recommends, but Policy, and even necessity. I would also advise that no particular appropriations be made of the Paper State Money, now remaining in the Treasury, but that all demands be answered when they are made, as far as it will go. No men can be enlisted for the Army, so that it is unnecessary to retain the money for this purpose. I plainly see that this money is fast approaching to its end, and that our present business is, to look for a substitute. With good management, I think we have now an opportunity of effecting this, but it requires attention and address, and for this reason, I wish, exceedingly, that Mr. Ross would immediately come down to assist in this matter. The money I wrote for, some time ago, need not be sent down, as Paper money has altogether ceased to be a currency here. The whole Army is now putting into motion, and my next may communicate something important. I am convinced that my Presence here is of infinitely more advantage to the State than it could be in Richmond; and I am also of opinion, that the Deliberations of the Assembly, on the most important objects which will come before them, Defence and Finance, must take their tone, altogether, from the event of our present operations.

I am, &c.,

*Governor Nelson to James Maury, Esq., Ag't of
the Flag Vessels.*

SIR:

W'msburg
Sept'r 27th
1781.

The present situation of our Affairs rendering it improper for the Vessels under your charge to proceed on their intended voyage, you will direct them to return to their respective Ports, till farther orders.

I am, &c.,

Governor Nelson to Col. Cropper.

SIR:

W'msburg
Sept'r 27th
1781.

Business of the greatest importance obliging Col. Blane, commissary-gen'l of purchases, to Visit your Shore, you will be pleased to lend him any assistance, in horses &c., which he may require.

I am, Sir,

Your Obed't Serv't.

The Governor being informed that the Refugees, who accompanied Lord Cornwallis to York, are making their escape across the Bay, begs that you will strictly examine all persons, who cross from the Western to the Eastern Shore, and that you will have such confined, as cannot render to you a satisfactory account of themselves.

ROBERT ANDREWS, *Sec'y.*

[The above was appended to the letter of Gov'r Nelson.]

Gov'r

Governor Nelson to Hon'ble David Jameson.

SIR:

I received your letter, enclosing extracts relative to the French agents. The consequences of such proceedings, I have long foreseen, and have laboured to guard against, by supplying the combined Armies with public provisions, forage, &c. I have met with much difficulty and vexation in the management of this matter, arising, partly from the machinations of their agents, partly from the unwillingness of the people to assist government, from which former treatment gives them, perhaps, too little reason to expect justice, and partly from the desire of handling gold, which has too often been found to prevail over every other consideration. I have been daily in expectation of Mr. Ross's assistance, which, unless I speedily receive, I am afraid we shall lose the chance that offers, of placing our finances in a respectable situation. Our progress here has been more considerable, for the time, than could have been expected, and attended with less opposition and loss. Yesterday morning it was discovered that the Enemy had evacuated their Outposts at Moore's Mill, Pigeon Quarter, and every other place beyond the Creek, except at Nelson's Farm. Our troops are to-day working on the grounds they relinquished. The French took possession of Pigeon Hill. There have been two men Killed
and

Camp
befo, York,
Octo, 1,
1781.

and six wounded. A sheriff's commission, for Westwood Armistead, Esq., of Elizabeth City, is wanting, which you will be pleased to enclose to me.

I am, Sir,
Your Mo. Obed. Servant,

*Gov'r Nelson to the Commissioners of provisions
of Accomac and Northampton.*

SIR:

Camp
befo. York
Octo. 3,
1781.

The fleet and Army of our Allies requiring large supplies of fresh provisions, it will be most convenient for your county to furnish its quota to the Navy. You will, therefore, dispose of the Beef, which the Public claims of your County, to the French Fleet, for Cash; your situation rendering it difficult to settle for it in any other manner.

I am, &c.

Gov'r Nelson to Count De Grasse.

SIR:

Camp
befo. York
Octo. 3,
1781.

Mr. Wray, the gentleman to whom I have applied to provide Houses and necessaries for your sick, will have the honor of delivering you this. His inclination leads him to render every service in his power to the generous friends of his

his Country, and, if your Excellency will have him furnished with money, he will be able, I hope, to procure for them every thing requisite.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Gov'r Nelson to Jacob Wray, Esq.

SIR:

To enable you more effectually to provide Houses and necessaries for the sick of the French Fleet, you are hereby empowered to take convenient Houses, always taking care not to distress inhabitants; and you will call on the commissioners of provisions for Elizabeth County to assist you, who are hereby required to deliver to you what provisions they have collected, or are, by law, directed to collect, which will answer your purposes. You will, instead of taking receipts, account for them with the public, in cash. If you find an assistant necessary, you will appoint such a one as you know to be competent to the Office.

Camp
befo. York
Octo. 3,
1781.

I am, &c.

Gov'r Nelson to Col. Thos. Newton, Jr.

SIR:

The provision Commissioners for Princefs Anne and Norfolk Counties will have it in their power to furnish you with a considerable number

Camp
befo. York
Octo. 3,
1781.

ber of Cattle, which, as it will be very inconvenient to apply them to the use of the Army, you will dispose of to the French Fleet, for cash. This will, at the same time, benefit the fleet and public; and the commissioners of the said counties are hereby required to collect and furnish to you what the law requires from their counties. The commissioners of Nantemond are also required to deliver to you, or your assistant, the Beeves of that part of their County lying between Suffolk and Portsmouth.

I am, Sir,

Your Obed't Serv't.

If two light Whale Boats can be got, you will be pleased to send them up immediately to Burwell's Ferry.

Gov'r Nelson to Col. Thomas Newton.

Octo. 3. The count De Graffe is much in want of provisions for his table, by which, I suppose, he may mean, Small meats and Vegetables. It much concerns me that he be well supplied, and I must beg that you will exert yourself for this purpose. If you cannot procure what is wanting by purchase, you are hereby authorized and empowered to procure it by impress, granting certificates for what you get in this way. You will also take the Vessels necessary for your purpose and their crews, and every other means of transf-

transportation which you shall find requisite. And all officers of the Militia, on whom you shall call for assistance, are hereby directed to aid you in the execution of this Office.

I am, &c., yr. ob. Se'v't.

Gov'r Nelson to Mr. De Tarle.

SIR:

I received your favor of the 2d yesterday. With respect to the rations of Corn, I think that I can venture to assure you there will be no other difficulty in furnishing them than what will arise from the want of the means of transportation, which, also, will be removed as soon as the Artillery and military stores are brought to Camp. Vessels were yesterday sent off to the eastern shore, a country abounding in corn and oats, where I had previously directed forage to be collected. These vessels will soon return, and others are out on the same business, which may be every day expected, especially one sent up James river, about twenty miles above Williamsburg, by Mr. Livingston, for fifteen hundred bushels of corn; fodder it will not be in my power to supply you with, for which reason I would take the liberty of advising that proper persons be sent up the country, where only it is to be had in considerable quantities, with money to purchase.

Camp
before York
Octo. 4,
1781.

chafe. Some for immediate use may be purchased in the neighborhood of Williamsburg. Had we possession of York river, abundant supplies of all kinds of forage might easily be drawn from the Country adjacent to it.

Gov'r Nelson to Count De Grasse.

SIR:

Camp
befo. York
Octo. 5,
1781.

Mr. Maury, who is charged with this letter to you, waits on your Excellency to be informed of the Circumstances of the detention of the flag Vessels carrying Tobacco to Charlestown. He was appointed the Agent to negotiate the sale of this tobacco, and to discharge the Officer's debts, but is now instructed, as political reasons may still make it improper for him to proceed, to return with the vessels, into Port.

He is also empowered to purchase for the State, any Vessels captured by his most Christian Majesty's fleet under your Command, which your Excellency may think proper to have disposed of in this manner; and I beg that you will aid him with your countenance, in the transacting of this business.

I have the Honor, &c.

Gov'r

Gov'r Nelson to Hon'ble Geo. Webb,

SIR:

Your letter of the 11th, accompanying several others from different Persons, has been received. Mr. Jamefon and myself are of opinion that Mr. Lyon may be permitted to reside in any Part of the upper Country, at a greater Distance than twenty miles above Richmond, on giving responsible security for his good Behaviour, and to be forth coming on the future order of the Board. We also advise that the Bill drawn by Col. Slaughter on the Treafury in favour of Capt. Price, for four thousand three hundred and seven pounds, ten shillings, be honored.

Camp,
befo. York
Octo. 17
1781.

Be fo good as to have the Seal of the Commonwealth affixed to the enclosed Proclamation, and have a printed copy of it fent to the Delegates of every County, and to each Senator.

Since my laft we took by ftorm two of the Enemy's Redoubts. The lofs, on both fides, was nearly equal, and did not exceed one hundred. Our Batteries are now playing on their works at the diftance of about 200 yards. By noon, I am informed, we fhall have feventy Pieces of heavy cannon planted againft them, which muft foon reduce them to Terms, unlefs they take a flight to Gloucefter, which may delay their capture a few days. Yefterday morning, a little before day break, they made a fally, and got into one of our batteries. They fpiked

8 Cannon, which were immediately unspiked, and Killed and wounded about 16 men. They were repulſed, and ſuffered nearly the ſame loſs.
I am, &c.

Gov'r Nelson to the Virginia Delegates to Congress.

GENTLEMEN:

Camp
befo. York
Octo. 20
1781.

It is with infinite pleaſure I congratulate you on the reduction of York and Glouceſter, and the Capture of the Whole Britiſh Army, under Lord Cornwallis. On the 17th, at the requeſt of Lord Cornwallis, hoſtilities ceaſed, and Yeſterday, the Garrifon of York, amounting to upwards of two thouſand nine hundred effectives, rank and file, marched out and grounded their arms. Their ſick are about ſeventeen hundred. The garrifon of Glouceſter, and the men Killed during the ſiege, are computed at near two thouſand, ſo that the whole loſs ſuſtained by the Enemy, on this Occaſion, muſt be between 6 and 7,000 men. This blow, I think, muſt be a deciſive one, it being out of the Power of G. B. to replace ſuch a number of good troops. His Excellency Gen'l Waſhington's letter will inform you of the nature of the capitulation, to which I muſt refer you, not having yet procured a copy of the Articles.

I have the Honor to be, Gentlemen, &c.
Your

Your favours of Sep'r 4th and 9th have been received. The interruption in our correspondence, that is, on my part, has proceeded from accident, partly, letters being ready for the last post, but, through hurry, not sent to the Office till too late.

Gov'r Nelson to Lord Cornwallis.

MY LORD:

I have been informed that a number of the Refugees from this State, and also negroes, are attempting to make their escape by getting on board the Bonetta Sloop of War. As they will endeavour to be concealed from your Lordship's notice, till the Vessel fails, I have thought it necessary to make this communication to you, that you may take measures to prevent the State, and individuals, from sustaining an injury of this nature.

Oct. 20
1781.

Governor Nelson to Gen'l Weddon.

SIR:

Your favour of this morning I have received. The refugees you have taken may be sent over here, and also the negroes whose masters live south of York River; and you will be pleased to direct some person to give papers to such

Camp
before York
Oct. 21,
1781.

such as belong to the north side, that they may immediately return to their owners. What we shall finally do with the sick and wounded prisoners, I have not yet determined. For the present, I shall order them to be guarded by the Militia of the County. All the arms, except of the Guard troops, are to be delivered to the conductor of military stores.

What you observe respecting negroes secreting themselves on board the Vessels, I had been before informed of, and have directed all the vessels to be searched.

Gov'r Nelson to Lord Cornwallis.

MY LORD:

Camp
befo. York
Oct. 21,
1781.

I have received your verbal message respecting two citizens—the Rev'd Mr. Wm. Andrews and the Rev'd Mr. Harrison, of this State, who joined the British Army after its arrival here, and who are now delivered up into the hands of the Civil Power. The laws of the Country have fixed the mode of proceeding against persons guilty of such conduct, and we are ignorant of any power which has a right to supersede their force. By these laws, enacted by their own representatives, they shall be fairly and impartially tried, and they must abide their sentence.

I am informed that Lieutenant Col. Simcoe
has

has refused to deliver up a certain Christopher Robinson, who now bears a commission in his corps, but who deserted from the actual service of the State.

The articles of capitulation cannot justify this detention, and I shall by no means acquiesce in it. It is my wish to treat the men, whom the fortune of War has put into our power, with that civility which their situation claims; and it would give me pain, in any instance, to act in a different manner. Your Lordship, in the case under consideration, has, I imagine, the power of preventing it, and, I flatter myself, you will at once see the propriety of exercising this power.

I have, &c.

Governor Nelson to Gov'r Lee (Maryland).

SIR:

When I wrote yesterday, I forgot to observe to you that the Militia of this State have orders to conduct the British Prisoners, allotted for Frederick Town, only to the Borders of your State. Your Excellency will, therefore, be pleased to make the necessary preparations for their reception. I am not so well acquainted with the Geography of the Upper Country as to be able to inform you at what Ferry they will cross, but they will be marched by the most direct

Camp
before York
Oct. 21,
1781.

direct route from Winchester to Fredericktown.

I have, &c.

Gov'r Nelson to the Commissary at Fredericksburg.

SIR:

Camp
befo. York
Oct. 21,
1781.

This day, the British prisoners were marched off from York. In about seven or eight days, they will pass through Fredericksburg. They will there draw some days' provisions, which you will, therefore, have ready to be delivered to them. The number of men will be little short of Six thousand.





ADDITIONAL LETTERS.

THE original design was to confine this volume to such of the letters of Governor Nelson as relate to the events mentioned in the preface; but a departure from that purpose was induced by the consideration, that the addition of the following letters would enable us to present, in one collection, all the letters of Governor Nelson which can be found in the archives of the State.

It is somewhat remarkable, that the diligence of Historians and Biographers has scarcely been rewarded by the discovery of a single letter of this eminent man—a reflection which ought to make this publication very precious in the eyes of Virginians.

Gov'r Nelson to the County Lieutenants of Loudon, Fauquier, Spotsylvania and Orange.

SIR:

Staunton,
June 19,
1781.

As the tour of duty of the militia from your County will expire with this month, I must, therefore, desire that you will immediately send forward the relief of men to join the Marquis Fayette. If it were possible that they could furnish themselves with Knapfacks, they would find great advantage from them on their march.

I am, &c.

[Copy sent to the County Lieutenant of each county.]

Gov'r Nelson to Colo. John Taylor.

SIR:

Staunton,
June 20,
1781.

The manner of equipping the legion to be raised and commanded by Gen'l Spotwood, will be left to himself. The Executive do not doubt his prudence in forming contracts for such accoutrements as may be wanted. To comply with his engagements they will make every exertion the distressed Circumstances of the Country will admit: but the State of the treasury will not allow of an advance of Money at this time. The accoutrements already provided are appropriated for the regular Dragoons already raised, who wait only to be furnished with them to take the Field, so that it would be improper to apply any part of these to other Purposes.

I am, &c.

Gov'r

Gov'r Nelson to Brigadier-General Morgan.

SIR:

Your letter of the 15th ins't, address'd to the Speaker of the House of Delegates, is referred to the Executive. The readiness which you shew to assist our invaded country, gives general satisfaction, and I doubt not but this Letter will meet you far advanced on your March to join the Marquis, with such Volunteers as you have been able to collect. I am sensible of the great Inconveniences arising to the People by being called out at the approach of Harvest; but I have my hopes that some capital Blow may be struck time enough to enable the Commander of the Troops to dispense with their services at that time. Should this not be the case, I flatter myself the Militia and Volunteers will consider the distresses occasioned to the lower Country, where the ravages of the Enemy, unless Speedily suppress'd, will involve the inhabitants in total Ruin. When the account of the Tradersmen for the necessaries furnished to Major Nelson's Corps, are, on your order, laid before the Executive, they will immediately take measures for their Discharge. We are convinced of the propriety of the proposition contained in the Letter, but our present situation demands dispatch, and so much time would elapse before the whole System could be effectuated, that the advantages to be derived from a vigorous and immediate effort would be lost;

Staunton,
June 20,
1781.

but as soon as the Situation of the State will admit, We will, with pleasure, patronize a Scheme which, they trust, will be productive of the most salutary effect.

I am, &c.

Governor Nelson to His Excellency Lord Cornwallis.

MY LORD:

Charlottes-
ville,
July 3rd,
1781.

The extreme Distress of our Officers and Soldiers who are prisoners at Charlestown, calls aloud on us for the most speedy and effectual relief we can afford them. I am informed a Proposition was on foot at the time Gen'l Philips died, since when nothing respecting this business has been done.

General Scott had a promise from the Commandant of Charlestown, that Passports should be granted to such Vessels as the Executive of this State should send with Tobacco, the only Article that is likely to benefit our Officers in that Market. It is necessary that some measures should be speedily adopted to enable them to discharge the Debts they have contracted with the Inhabitants. Should I be under the necessity of sending to Charlestown for the passports, much Time will elapse, and the inconveniences will be increased to both parties; I take the Liberty, therefore, of making Application to your Lordship, and hope to be
honoured

honoured with an Answer by the return of the Flag. About six hundred Hogtheads will be sufficient for the purpose.

I have the Honour to be, &c.

Gov'r Nelson to the Marquis La Fayette.

SIR:

I enclose you Papers received yesterday, Richmond
Aug. 3d,
1781. relative to a seizure of Stores, the property of this State, made by Gen'l Wayne. This Step will, in a considerable Degree, distress us, the Stores being intended for the use of our Troops now in the Field, which are in the greatest want of them. Besides, the Action, in itself, is of such a nature as is not to be tolerated where civil Government is established, and regular modes laid down for procuring necessaries for our Armies. Other Excesses are also said to be committed on the Property of Individuals by the Troops of the Pennsylvania Line. I would willingly flatter myself, that they are done without the Privity and Countenance of the Officers. But, whatever the Authority may be under which they are perpetrated, as first Magistrate of the State, and Guardian of the Rights of the People, it is my Duty to take Care that they be in future prevented. For this purpose, I have made you this representation, who, as Com-
mander

mander-in-Chief of the American Forces in the State of Virginia, must be vested with a Power of examining into and regulating the Conduct of all subordinate Officers. If there is any thing which you would wish to communicate to the Executive, they will be happy in giving you an Opportunity, in the Council Chamber, at any time you shall think proper.

I am, &c.

Gov'r Nelson to the Virginia Delegates in Congress.

GENTLEMEN:

Richmond
Aug. 3^d,
1781.

In the last Letter I wrote to you, I mentioned that a Fleet of the Enemy's Transports, with troops on Board, had fallen down from Portsmouth into Hampton Road. They have since moved round into York River, and have landed both on the York and Gloucester Shores. The uncertainty we were in, with respect to their Intentions, had induced the Marquis to take a Position not far below this Place, that he might have it in his Power to march either Northward or southward, as their movements should make necessary. Few Troops were left below, as it was not suspected that they would come to a Place, the neighbourhood of which they had lately evacuated. From these circumstances, and their being able, with ease

case, to transport their troops across the River, as they see fit, they will have it in their Power for a short Time, to commit great Devastations. These sudden Incurfions into different parts of the State, are Calamities which the Geography of the Country, and their possessing the Water, make it impossible for us to guard against; but I hope the measures we have taken for our Defence will effectually prevent, in future, their penetrating far, or possessing long, what their command of the Water does not secure to them. I am anxious to hear what Congress has done respecting the Illinois Country. It is a matter which, I think, ought not to be deferred, if they mean to take it up at all.

Mr. Charles Tomkins and William Buckner, Inhabitants of Gloucester County, were taken prisoners by the Enemy some time last March, in Chesapeake Bay, by Arbuthnot's Fleet, which they mistook for a French one, and, I am informed, are now confined at New York. They were only private Militia men when taken, and, by a Cartel settled between the Commanders of the American and British Southern Armies, all the Militia, made Prisoners in the Southern Department before the 15th of last June, are exchanged, and are to be immediately liberated. They are, then, evidently entitled to their Liberty, and cannot be refused it, on Application being made for this purpose. I hope you will take the trouble of doing them this Favour, and recovering two good Citizens for the State.

I have

I have, for a long Time, had no other Information of what has been doing in your part of the Continent, than what Vague report has given me. If any Intelligence has been intended, it has met with some Interruption. This, I am inclined to think, has been the case, as I understand the last Mail was robbed near Christiana Bridge.

I shall, once a Week, expect to be favoured, by some one of you, with the news of your City.

I am, &c.,

Gov'r Nelson to Mr. Peter Hogg.

SIR:

Richmond
Aug. 9th,
1781.

Your Letter of the 2d instant, inclosing the petition of John Claypole and others, has been delivered to me by Mr. Wodrow. The Executive are unanimously disposed [to extend] to these unhappy People the same Lenity that others have experienced, but they find some Difficulty in adopting a proper Mode. It has been a particular Object with the Framers of our Constitution, to Keep as wide apart as possible, the Executive and the Judiciary powers. These Petitioners, having been once in the possession of a Court, by whom they were continued for further Trial, a Doubt arises whether the Executive can interfere, the Judges of the Gen'l Court

Court being the only power from Whom a Writ of Nolle Prosequi can issue. The commission of Oyer and Terminer not having been executed, no further Procefs will be ordered against the Petitioners until the meeting of the General Court, before which the Assembly will sit, according to Adjournment, to whom this matter will be referred. I must acknowledge there is a Degree of Hardship in their case, when compared with the Case of those who have been equally culpable, or, perhaps, more so, by continuing obstinate until Pardon was offered, which these did not wait for, but shewed a Disposition to return to their Duty, by delivering themselves up to Justice prior to that Period: but as they are all bailed, no great Inconveniences will arise to them for a short time. With respect to those who have been bound over to the next Grand Jury Court of the County for Misdemeanor, the Law must take its course.

I am, &c.

Gov'r Nelson to his Excellency Governor Burke.

SIR:

The inclosed Letter, from the President of Congress, was put into my hands, yesterday, which I opened by Mistake. The line of Expresses

Richmond
Aug. 10,
1781.

presses being now established, I hope we shall Keep up, at least, a weekly Correspondence.

In my last, I informed you that the Enemy had embarked a very considerable Part of their force, and were fallen down to Hampton Road, with intention of moving up the Bay, or to New York; but, contrary to the Expectations of every one, they have taken post at York and Gloucester, where they will make themselves so strong that it will be difficult to force them out. There is a matter on which, almost, the Existence of this State and that of the Army depend, and to which I beg your immediate Attention. By a late Resolution of Congress, the Bermudians are declared to be on the same footing with the Americans, as the Inhabitants of the other British Islands, which is, in Fact, declaring that their Vessels shall be legal Prize to any American vessels that may take them, and that they shall have no commercial Connexion with the United States, which they have hitherto enjoyed in a Small Degree, as to the Article of Provisions. By this means we used to get, now and then, Salt brought to us for these necessaries, though in small quantities, but which, with some Assistance from other Islands, was sufficient for our necessary Purposes. Our Ports being blocked up, and this Chance of procuring Salt from the Bermudians taken from us, I Know not how we are to be supplied with it, unless you can assist us by securing what you have already in the State, and adopting some
Plan

Plan for importing farther. As it is probable this will be the Seat of war, we have very little prospect of being able to import any, and, without it, it will be impossible to support the Army. I mention this matter for your Consideration, as, in my Opinion, the Interest of the South is deeply concerned in it.

I am, &c.

Gov'r Nelson to the Marquis de la Fayette.

DEAR SIR:

Colo. Davies, in consequence of my Directions, sent the inclosed Prefs warrants to one of Major Claiborne's Assistants that they might be either forwarded to Major Claiborne, or executed immediately, as might be most convenient. To my great surprize, I yesterday had them returned to me with a Letter from Mr. Green, the Assistant Quarter Master, which I can view in no other Light than as an Insult. This Gentleman seems to think himself under no controul but Major Claiborne's. The very exceptionable part of my Letter is only an extract from the Act of Assembly empowering the Executive to issue Impresses. Perhaps, if he receives the Warrants from you, he may think himself bound to obey, and, therefore, that there may be no longer Delay in this matter, I take

Richmond
Aug. 15,
1781.

the Liberty of fending them to you. This Business would have been executed sooner had I not waited for an Assistant of Claiborne's, who was to be stationed at this Place. Mr. Green at length arrived, but informs me that he is to take Charge of the Office, only, having nothing to do with the District Business, as he calls it, so that, by Punctilios, the Army is likely to go without Provisions. Unless something decisive is done with this department, the Operations of the Army will be greatly retarded. Major Claiborne has received upwards of twenty Waggon from the Country, which, with the number already mentioned in the warrants, I am in hopes will be sufficient. If they have been applied to any other Purpose, and he will inform me of it, I will extend the Imprefs. I have a right to know in what manner Articles that have been taken from the Citizens are applied.

Captain Muir has presented a Certificate for the Loss of two Horses, at Petersburg. The Circumstances relative to this matter are exactly similar to those of Major Mitchell, in whose case you gave an order on the Continental Quarter Master General.

Several of the Inhabitants of York have applied to me for Flags, to endeavour to remove their Families from thence. It would save much trouble, if some mode could be adopted for a general Application to Lord Cornwallis. For the present, however, I wish Mr. Reynolds and
Mr.

[71]

Mr. Gibbons could be indulged with one. I understand Col. Matthews is at Byrds. He might send a Dragoon with these Gentlemen.

I am, &c.







