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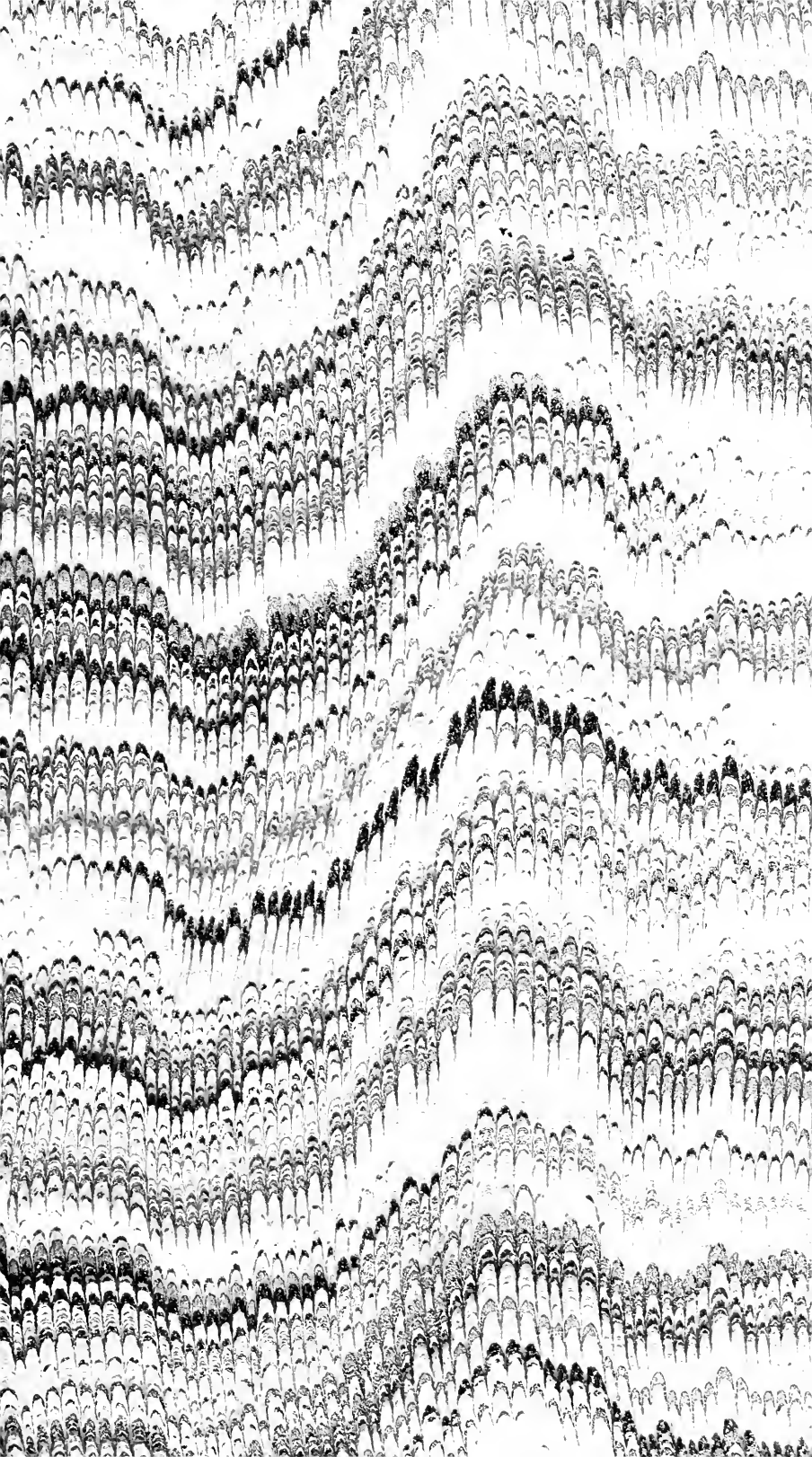
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Vol. 2

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA











GENERAL WASHINGTON'S

LETTERS

TO THE

MARQUIS DE CHASTELLUX.

CHARLESTON, S. C.

PRINTED BY C. C. SEBRING.

1825.

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1825

A

BRIEF MEMOIR

OF THE

MARQUIS DE CHASTELLUX.



A SHORT sketch of the life and character of a man who obtained the friendship and esteem of WASHINGTON, cannot fail of being interesting to every admirer of that distinguished friend, and father of his country. The MARQUIS OF CHASTELLUX descended from an ancient family in Bourgogne. He was born in Paris in 1734. In his childhood he lost his father, who was a Lieutenant-General in the army of France. The Marquis entered the army at fifteen years of age; at twenty-one had the command of a regiment, and a short time after had a regiment of his own name. He served during the seven years war in Germany with credit

to himself and country. But even among the busy and boisterous scenes of hostile movements, he pursued at every interval his favourite literary studies. The activity of his mind was in a high degree equal to his thirst for knowledge. A sincere desire to be useful to mankind, and firmness to encounter every danger to gratify that desire, were among the leading characteristics of his life. When the subject of inoculation for the small-pox was agitated in France, it was difficult to procure a person, who was willing to submit to the then untried experiment in that country. But Chastellux although a youth offered himself to test its utility; and on his recovery, called on a friend, and made use of the following noble expression: "Here I am safe, and what is still more gratifying to me, is, that I shall be the cause of saving many others."

In the year 1780, the Marquis accompanied the army commanded by Count Rochambeau to the United States; in which army he held the rank of Major-General. In this station he never ceased to give proof of his activity, knowledge, and firmness; by which he not only gained the applause of his King, and the American Commander in Chief; but even that of their enemies.

In this service, as the following letters will show, he was particularly distinguished by that penetrating judge of merit, Washington: a sincere friendship took place between them, which only ended with their lives. The Marquis was taken from the world at the time, when the services of such men were most needed: when the dark clouds of revolutionary fury began to hover over his devoted country. But had he lived a short time longer, he might, as was the case with numerous friends he left behind, have fallen a victim to that anarchy, which deluged his country with blood. He was a sincere friend to rational liberty; but possessed too much firmness, and integrity, to have been a silent spectator of that licentiousness which under the perverted name of liberty, was the most horrid of all tyrannies. He died in 1788, leaving an amiable and accomplished widow, and an infant son, Alfred, who appears to possess the active disposition of his father, and like him, to pursue the road to usefulness and fame.

The Marquis held a distinguished rank among the literary characters of France; and some of his works are esteemed among the most valuable productions of the age.

The letters of which the annexed are true copies, were shown me by the widow of the Marquis, who permitted me to take copies of them; and wishing to multiply the chances of preserving them, and not doubting that they would be acceptable to the *Charleston Library Society*,* they are respectfully presented by

WILLIAM WILLIS.

Charleston, 1808.

* This edition is copied from those presented to the Charleston Library Society.

LETTERS.

New Windsor, Jan. 23, 1781.

DEAR SIR,

ACCEPT my congratulations on your safe arrival at Newport in good health, after traversing so much of the American theatre of war. And my thanks for your obliging favour of the 12th making mention thereof, and introductory of the Count de Chartus, *Chartus* whose agreeable countenance alone is a sufficient index to the amiable qualities of his mind, and does not fail at first view, to make favourable impressions on all who see him.

He spent a few days with us at Head Quarters, and is gone to Philadelphia, accompanied by Count de Dillon. I parted with him yesterday at Ringwood, to which place I had repaired to be convenient to the suppression of a partial mutiny in the Jersey troops at Pompton, who, in imitation of those of Pennsylvania, had revolted, and were in a state of disobedience to their officers. This business was happily effected without bloodshed; two of the principal actors were immediately executed on the spot, and due subordination restored before I returned.

I wish I had expression equal to my feelings, that

I might disclose to you, the high sense I have of, and the value I set upon your approbation and friendship. It will be the wish and happiness of my life, to merit a continuation of them; and to assure you upon all occasions of my admiration of your character and virtues, and of the sentiments of esteem and regard with which I have the honour to be,

Dear Sir,

Your most obedient

And humble servant,

(Signed)

GEO. WASHINGTON.

MARQUIS DE CHASTELLUX.

New Windsor, May 7, 1731.

DEAR SIR,

PERMIT me, on this first occasion of writing to you, to begin my letter with congratulations on your recovered health, and I offer them sincerely.

Colonel Mernonville put into my hands two days since, your favour of the 29th ult. If my inclination was seconded by the means, I should not fail to treat this gentleman as the friend of my friend. And if it is not in my power to comply with his wishes on the score of provisions, I will candidly deal with him by communicating the causes.

I am impressed with too high a sense of the abilities and candour of the Chevalier Chastellux to conceive that he is capable of creating false hopes: his communication, therefore, of the West-India intelligence comes with merited force. And I would to God it were in my power to make the proper advan-

tage of it. But if you can recollect a private conversation which I had with you in the Count de Rochambeau's chamber, you will be persuaded it is not; especially when I add that the want of which I then complained, exists in much greater force than it did at that time; but such preparations as can be made, I will make for the events you allude to. The candid world, and a well informed officer, will expect no more.

May you participate in those blessings you have invoked heaven for me; and may you live to see a happy termination of a struggle, which was begun and has been continued for the purpose of rescuing America from Slavery, and securing to its inhabitants their indubitable rights, in which you bear a conspicuous part, is the ardent wish of,

Dear Sir,

Your most obedient,

And most humble servant,

(Signed)

GEO. WASHINGTON.

MARQUIS DE CHASTELLUX.

New Windsor, June 13, 1781.

MY DEAR CHEVALIER,

I HEAR from the purport of the letter you did me the honour to write from Newport on the 9th, that my sentiments respecting the Council of War held on board the Duke de Burgogne (the 31st of May,) have been misconceived, and I shall be very unhappy if they receive an interpretation different from the true intent and meaning of them. If this is the

case, it can only be attributed to my not understanding the business of the Duke de Lauzun perfectly. I will rely therefore on your goodness and candour to explain and rectify the mistake if any has happened.

My wishes perfectly coincided with the determination of the Board of War to continue the fleet at Rhode Island, provided it could remain there in safety with the force required, and did not impede the march of the Army towards the North River; but when Duke Lauzun informed me, that my opinion of the propriety and safety of this measure was required by the board, and that he came hither at the particular request of the Counts Rochambeau, and de Barras, to obtain it, I was reduced to the painful necessity of delivering a sentiment different from that of a most respectable Board, or of forfeiting all pretensions to candour by the concealment of it. Upon this ground it was, I wrote to the Generals to the effect I did, and not because I was dissatisfied at the alteration of the plan agreed to at Wethersfield. My fears for the safety of the fleet, which I am now persuaded were carried too far, were productive of a belief that the Generals when separated might feel uneasy at every mysterious preparation of the enemy, and occasion a fresh call for militia. This had some weight in my determination to give Boston (where I was sure no danger could be encountered but that of blockade) a preference to Newport, where under some circumstances, though not such as were likely to happen, something might be enterprized.

The fleet being at Rhode Island is attended certainly with many advantages in the operation proposed, and I entreat that you and the gentlemen who were

of opinion that it ought to be risked there for those purposes, will be assured that I have a high sense of the obligation you meant to confer on America by that resolve, and that your zeal to promote the common cause and my anxiety for the safety of so valuable a fleet, were the *only* motives which gave birth to the apparent difference in our opinion.

I set that value on your friendship and candour, and that implicit belief in your attachment to America that they are only to be equalled by the sincerity with which I have the honour to be,

Dear Sir,

Your most obedient

And obliged humble Servant,

(Signed)

GEO. WASHINGTON.

MARQUIS DE CHASTELLUX.

July 18, 1781.

MY DEAR CHEVALIER,

You have taken a most effectual method of obliging me to accept your cask of Claret, as I find by your ingenious manner of stating the case, that I shall by a refusal, bring my patriotism into question, and incur a suspicion of want of attachment to the French nation, and of regard to you, which of all things I wish to avoid.

I will not enter into a discussion of the point of divinity, as I perceive you are a master of that weapon. In short, my dear sir, my only scruple arises from a fear of depriving you of an article that you cannot conveniently replace in this country. You can only

relieve me, by promising to partake very often of that hilarity, which a glass of good claret seldom fails to produce.

With much truth and affection,

I am yours, &c.

(Signed)

GEO. WASHINGTON.

MARQUIS DE CHASTELLUX.

Philadelphia, Jan. 4, 1782.

MY DEAR CHEVALIER,

I CANNOT suffer your old acquaintance, Mrs. Custis, to proceed to Williamsburg, without taking with her a remembrance of my friendship for you.

I have been detained here by Congress to assist in making the necessary arrangements for next campaign, and am happy to find so favourable a disposition in that body to prepare vigorously for it. They have resolved to keep up the same number of corps as constituted the army of last year; and have called upon the states in a pressing manner to complete them. Requisitions of money are also made, but how far the abilities and inclinations of the states, individually, will coincide with the demands, is more than I am able at this early period to inform you. A further pecuniary aid, from your generous nation, and a decisive naval force upon this coast in the latter end of May, or beginning of June, unlimited in its stay and operations, would, unless the resources of Great Britain are inexhaustible, or she can form powerful alliances, bid fair to finish the war in the course of next campaign (if she means to prosecute it) with the ruin of that people. The

first, that is, an aid of money, would enable our financier to support the expenses of the war with ease and credit, without anticipating or deranging those funds which Congress are endeavouring to establish, and which will be productive, though they are slow in the operation. The second, a naval-force superiority, would compel the enemy to draw their whole force to a point, which would not only be a disgrace to their arms, by the relinquishment of posts and states which they affect to have conquered, but might eventually be fatal to their army; or by attempting to hold them, to be cut off in detail. So that in either case the most important good consequences would result from the measure.

As you will have received in a more direct channel than from me, the news of the surprise and recapture of St. Eustatia by the arms of France, I shall only congratulate you on the event, and add, that it marks in a striking point of view, the genius of the Marquis de Boullin for enterprise and for intrepidity in resources in difficult circumstances: his conduct upon this occasion does him infinite honour.

Amid the numerous friends who would rejoice to see you at this place, none (while I stay here) could give you a more sincere and cordial welcome than I should. Shall I entreat you to present me to the circle of your friends in the army around you, with all that warmth and attachment of the purest friendship and regard,

I have the honour to be,

Dear Sir,

Your affectionate humble Servant,

(Signed)

GEO. WASHINGTON

MARQUIS DE CHASTELLUX.

Head Quarters at Newburgh, Aug. 10, 1782.

MY DEAR CHEVALIER,

I LOVE and thank you for the sentiments contained in your letter of the 5th. I look forward with pleasure to the epocha which will place us conveniently in one camp, as we are congenial in our sentiments. I shall embrace you, when it happens, with the warmth of perfect friendship.

My time during my winter residence in Philadelphia, was unusually (for me) divided between parties of pleasure, and parties of business. The first, nearly of a sameness at all times and places in this infant country, is easily conceived, at least is too unimportant for description. The second was only diversified with perplexities, and could afford no entertainment. Convinced of these things myself, and knowing that your intelligence with respect to foreign affairs was better and more interesting than mine, I had no subject to address you upon; thus then do I account for my silence.

My time since I joined the army in this quarter, has been occupied principally in providing for, disciplining, and preparing, under many embarrassments, the troops for the field. Cramped as we have been and still are for the want of money, every thing moves slowly, but as this is no new case, I am not discouraged by it.

The enemy talk loudly and confidentially of peace, but whether they are in earnest, or whether it is to amuse, and while away the time till they can prepare for more vigorous prosecution of the war, time will evince. Certain it is the refugees at New-

York are violently convulsed, by a letter which ere this you will have seen published, from Sir Guy Charleton and Admiral Digby to me, upon the subject of a general pacification and acknowledgement of the independence of this country. Adieu, my dear Chevalier. A sincere esteem and regard, bids me assure you, that with sentiments of pure affection
I am yours, &c.

(Signed)

GEO. WASHINGTON.

MARQUIS DE CHASTELLUX.

Newburgh, December 14, 1782.

MY DEAR CHEVALIER,

I FELT too much to express any thing, the day I parted with you. A sense of your public services to this country, and gratitude for your private friendship, quite overcame me at the moment of our separation. But I should be wanting to the feelings of my heart, and should do violence to my inclination, was I to suffer you to leave this country without the warmest assurances of an affectionate regard for your person and character.

Our good friend, the Marquis de la Fayette, prepared me (long before I had the honour to see you) for those impressions of esteem, which opportunities, and your benevolent mind have since improved into a deep and lasting friendship—a friendship which time nor distance can ever eradicate.

I can truly say, never in my life did I ever part with a man to whom my soul clave more sincerely than it did to you. My warmest wishes will attend you in

your voyage across the Atlantic, to the rewards of a generous prince, the arms of affectionate friends, and be assured that it will be one of my highest gratifications, to keep a regular intercourse with you by letter. I regret exceedingly that circumstances should withdraw you from this country before the accomplishment of that independence and peace which the arms of our good ally have assisted in placing before us in such an agreeable point of view. Nothing would give me more pleasure than to accompany you after the war, in a tour through the great continent of North America, in search of the natural curiosities with which it abounds, and to view at the same time the foundation of a rising empire.

I have the honour to be,

With sentiments of the

Most perfect esteem and regard,

Dear Sir,

Your most obedient,

Humble servant,

(Signed)

GEO. WASHINGTON.

P. S. Permit me trouble you with the enclosed letter to the Marquis de la Fayette.

G. W.

CHEVALIER DE CHASTELLUX.

Head Quarters, Newburgh, May 10, 1783.

MY DEAR CHEVALIER,

THE affectionate expressions in your farewell letter of the 8th January from Annapolis, gave a new spring to the pleasing remembrance of our past intimacy, and your letter of the 4th of March, from Paris, has convinced me, that time nor distance can eradicate the seeds of friendship when they have taken root in a good soil, and are nurtured by philanthropy and benevolence; that I value your esteem, and wish to retain a place in your affections, are truths of which I hope you are convinced, as I wish you to be of my sincerity when I assure you that it is among the first wishes of my heart to pay that tribute of respect to your nation, to which I am prompted by motives of public consideration and private friendship; but however far it may be in my power to yield a prompt obedience to my inclination, is more than I can decide upon at present.

You have, my dear Chevalier, placed before my eyes, the exposed situation of my seat on the Potomac, and warned me of the danger which is to be apprehended from a surprise, but as I have an entire confidence in, and an affection for your countrymen, I shall bid defiance to the enterprise, under a full persuasion, that if success should attend it, and I cannot make terms for my releasement, I shall be generously treated by my captors, and there is such a thing as a pleasing captivity.

At present both armies remain in the same situation you left them, except that all hostilities have ceased in this quarter, and things have put on a more tran-

quill appearance than heretofore. We look forward with anxious expectation for the definitive treaty to remove the doubts and difficulties which prevail at present, and to rid our country of our newly acquired friends at New-York, and other places within these states, of whose company we are heartily tired.

Sir Guy, with whom I have had a meeting at Dobb's Ferry, for the purpose of ascertaining the epoch of this event, could give me no definitive answer, but general assurances that he was taking every preparatory measure for it. One of which was, that a few days previous to the interview, he had shipped off for Nova Scotia, upwards of six thousand refugees or loyalists, who, apprehending they would not be received as citizens of the United States, he thought it his best duty to remove, previous to the evacuation of the city by the king's troops.

The Indians have commenced hostilities on the frontiers of Pennsylvania and Virginia, killing and scalping whole families, who had just returned to the habitations from which they had fled, in expectation of enjoying them in peace. These people will be troublesome neighbours to us, unless they can be removed to a much greater distance, and this is only to be done by purchase or conquest; which of the two will be adopted by Congress, I know not. The first I believe would be cheapest, and perhaps most consistent with justice. The latter most effectual.

Mrs. Washington is very sensible of your remembrance of her, and presents her best respects to you, in which all the gentlemen of my family, who are

with me, cordially and sincerely join. Tilghman, I expect, has before this entered into the matrimonial state with a cousin of his, whom you may have seen at Mr. Carroll's near Baltimore. My best wishes attend Baron Montesquieu, and such other gentlemen within your circle as I have the honour to be acquainted with. I can only repeat to you assurances of the most perfect friendship and attachment, and that

I am, my dear Chevalier,

Your most obedient

And most affectionate Servant,

(Signed,)

GEO. WASHINGTON.

MARQUIS CHASTELLUX.

Princeton, October 12, 1783.

MY DEAR CHEVALIER,

I HAVE not had the honour of a letter from you since the 4th of March last; but I will ascribe my disappointment to any cause sooner than to a decay of your friendship.

Having the appearances, and indeed the enjoyment of peace without the final declaration of it, I who am only waiting for the ceremonials, or till the British forces shall have taken their leave of New-York, am held in an awkward and disagreeable situation, being anxiously desirous to quit the walks of public life, and under my own vine, and my own fig-tree, to seek those enjoyments and that relaxation, which a mind that has been constantly on the stretch for more than eight years, stands so much in want of. I have fixed this epoch to the arrival of

the definitive treaty, or to the evacuation of my country by our newly acquired friends. In the mean while, at the request of Congress, I spend my time with them at this place, where they came in consequence of the riots at Philadelphia, of which doubtless you have been informed, for it is not a very recent transaction.

They have lately determined to fix the permanent residence of Congress near the falls of the Delaware, but where they will hold their sessions, till they can be properly established at that place, is yet undecided.

I have lately made a tour through the Lakes George and Champlain, as far as the Crown Point: then returning to Schenectady, I proceeded up the Mowhawk river to Fort Schyler, (formerly Fort Stanwix,) crossed over the Wood Creek, which empties into the Oneida Lake, and affords the water communication with Ontario. I then traversed the country to the head of the Eastern Branch of the Susquehannah, and viewed the Lake Otsego, and the Portage between that Lake and the Mowhawk river at Carajohario.

Prompted by these actual observations, I could not help taking a more contemplative, and extensive view of the inland navigation of these United States, from maps and the information of others, and could not but be struck with the immense extension and importance of it, and with the goodness of that Providence, which has dealt her favours to us with so profuse a hand. Would to God we may have wisdom enough to make a good use of them. I shall not rest contented till I have explored the western

part of this country, and traversed those lines (or a great part of them) which have given bounds to a new empire. But when it may, if it ever should happen, I dare not say, as my first attention must be given to the deranged situation of my private concerns, which are not a little injured by almost nine years absence, and total disregard of them.

With every wish for your health and happiness, and with the most sincere and affectionate regard,

I am, my dear Chevalier,

Your most obedient servant,

(Signed)

GEO. WASHINGTON.

MARQUIS CHASTELLUX.

Mount Vernon, Feb. 1, 1784.

MY DEAR CHEVALIER,

I HAVE had the honour to receive your favour of the 23d of August, from L'Orient, and hope this letter will find you in the circle of your friends at Paris, well recovered from the fatigues of your inspection of the frontiers of the kingdom. I am at length become a private citizen on the banks of the Potomac, where under my own vine, and my own fig-tree, free from the bustle of a camp, and the intrigues of a court, I shall view the busy world with calm indifference, and with serenity of mind, which the soldier in pursuit of glory, and the statesman, of a name, have not leisure to enjoy. I am not only retired from all public employments, but am retiring

within myself, and shall tread the private walks of life with heartfelt satisfaction.

After seeing New-York evacuated by the British forces on the 25th of November, and civil government established in the city, I repaired to Congress, and surrendered all my powers, with my commission, into their hands, on the 23d of December, and arrived at this cottage the day before Christmas, where I have been close locked in frost and snow ever since.

Mrs. Washington thanks you for your kind remembrance of her, and prays you to accept her best wishes in return. With sentiments of pure and unabated friendship, I am, my dear Chevalier,

Your most affectionate

And obedient Servant,

(Signed)

GEO. WASHINGTON.

MARQUIS CHASTELLUX.

Mount Vernon, June 2, 1784.

DEAR SIR,

I HAD the honour to receive a letter from you by Major L'Enfort. My official letters to the Counts de Estaign and Rochemaubeau, (which I expect will be submitted to the members of the Society of Cincinnati in France) will inform you of the proceedings of the general meeting, held at Philadelphia on the 3d ult. and of the reasons which induced a departure from some of the original principles, and rules of the Society. As these have been detailed, I will

not repeat them, and as we have no occurrences out of the common course, except the establishment of two new States in the Western Territory, and the appointment of Mr. Jefferson (whose talents and worth are well known to you) as one of the commissioners for forming commercial treaties in Europe, I only repeat to you the assurances of my friendship, and express to you a wish that I could see you in the shade of those trees which my hands have planted, and which by their rapid growth, at once indicate a knowledge of my declination, and their willingness to spread their mantles over me, before I go hence to return no more; for this their gratitude, I will nurture them while I stay.

Before I conclude, permit me to recommend Col. Humphreys, who is appointed Secretary to the Commission, to your countenance and civilities, whilst he remains in France. He possesses an excellent heart and a good understanding.

With every sentiment of esteem and regard,

I am, my dear Chevalier,

Your most affectionate Servant,

(Signed)

GEO. WASHINGTON.

MARQUIS DE CHASTELLUX.

Mount Vernon, Aug. 20, 1784.

DEAR SIR,

THE Marquis de la Fayette, whom I had been looking for with the eyes of friendship and impatience, arrived here on Tuesday last, and presented me your favour of the 16th June.

I thank you, my dear Sir, for every testimony of your remembrance of me, and every fresh assurance you give me, of the continuation of your friendship, is pleasing; it serves (to borrow an Indian phrase) to brighten the chain, and to convince me that you will not suffer rust or moth to injure or impair it. We often talk of you, and though we wish in vain to have you of our party, we do not fail to drink your health at dinner every day. I will not give up the hope of seeing you at Mount Vernon before I quit the stage of human action. The idea would be too painful—I must indulge a contrary one.

As I have no communications at this time, that are worthy of your attention, and a house full of company to claim mine, I shall, as the ship by which I write, has spread its canvas, only add new assurances of what I hope you were before convinced, that

I am, with the greatest esteem and regard,

My dear Sir,

Your most obedient and

Very humble servant,

(Signed)

GEO. WASHINGTON.

MARQUIS DE CHASTELLUX.

Mount Vernon, Sept. 5, 1785.

DEAR SIR,

I AM your debtor for two letters; one of the 12th of December, the other of the 8th of April. Since the receipt of the first, I have paid my respects to you in a line or two by Major Swan, but as it was introductory only of him, it requires apology rather than entitles me to credit in our epistolary correspondence.

If I had as good a knack, my dear Marquis, as you have, at saying handsome things, I would endeavour to pay you in kind for the many flattering expressions of your letters, having an ample field to work in; but as I am a clumsy labourer in the manufactory of compliments, I must first profess my unworthiness of those which you have bestowed on me, and then conscious of my inability of meeting you upon that ground, confess that it is better not to enter the list than to retreat from it in disgrace.

It gives me great pleasure to find by my last letters from France, that the dark clouds which overspread your hemisphere are yielding to the sunshine of peace. My first wish is to see the blessings of it diffused through all countries and among all ranks in every country, and that we should consider ourselves as the children of a common parent, and be disposed to acts of brotherly kindness towards one another. In that case restriction of trade would vanish. We should take your wines, your fruit and surpluse of such articles as our necessities or convenience might require, and in return give you our fish, our oil, our

tobacco, our naval stores, &c.; and in like manner should exchange produce with other countries, to the reciprocal advantage of each; and as the globe is large, why need we wrangle for a small spot of it? If one country cannot contain us, another should open its arms to us; but these halcyon days (if they ever did exist) are now no more. A wise Providence, I presume, has decreed it otherwise, and we shall be obliged to go on in the old way, disputing, and now and then fighting, until the great globe itself dissolves.

I rarely go from home, but my friends in and out of Congress inform me of what is on the carpet; to hand it to you afterwards would be circuitous and idle; as I am persuaded that you have correspondents at New-York, who give them to you at first hand, and can relate them with more clearness and precision. I give the chief of my time to rural amusements, but I have lately been active in instituting a plan which, if success attends it, and of which I have no doubt, may be productive of great political, as well as commercial advantages to the States on the Atlantic, especially the middle ones. It is the improving and extending the inland navigations of the rivers Potowmac and James, and communicating them with the Western Waters, by the shortest and easiest portages, and good roads. Acts have passed the Assemblies of Virginia and Maryland, authorizing private adventurers to undertake the work. Companies in consequence are incorporated, and that on this river is begun; but when we come to the difficult parts of it, we shall require an Engineer of skill and practical knowledge in this branch

of business, and from that country where these kinds of improvements have been conducted with the greatest success.

With my greatest esteem and regard,

I am, very dear Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

(Signed)

GEO. WASHINGTON.

MARQUIS CHASTELLUX.

Mount Vernon, Aug. 3, 1786.

MY DEAR MARQUIS,

I CANNOT omit to seize the earliest occasion to acknowledge the receipt of the very affectionate letter you did me the honour to write to me on the 22d May, as well as to thank you for the present of your travels in America, and the translation of Col. Humphreys' poem, all of which came safe to hand by the same conveyance.

Knowing as I did, the candour, liberality and philanthropy of the Marquis de Chastellux, I was prepared to disbelieve any imputations that might militate against those amiable qualities; for character and habits are not easily taken up, or suddenly laid aside. Nor does that mild species of philosophy, which aims at promoting human happiness, ever belie itself by deviating from the generous and godlike pursuit: having, notwithstanding, understood that some misrepresentations of the work in question had been circulated; I was happy to learn, that you had

taken the most effectual method to put a stop to their circulation, by publishing a more ample and correct edition. Colonel Humphreys, (who spent some weeks at Mount Vernon) confirmed me in the sentiment, by giving me a most flattering account of the whole performance. He has also put into my hands the translation of that part, in which you say such and so many handsome things of me, that (although no sceptic on ordinary occasions) I may perhaps be allowed to doubt whether your friendship and partiality have not in this one instance acquired an ascendancy over your cooler judgment.

Having been thus unwarily, and I may be permitted to add, almost unavoidably betrayed into a kind of necessity to speak of myself, and not wishing to resume that subject, I choose to close it for ever, by observing, that as on the one hand I consider it as an indubitable mark of a mean-spiritedness and pitiful vanity to court applause from the pen or tongue of man; so on the other, I believe it to be a proof of false modesty, or an unworthy affectation of humility, to appear altogether insensible to the commendations of the virtuous and enlightened part of our species.

Perhaps nothing can excite more perfect harmony in the *soul*, than to have this spring vibrate in unison with the internal consciousness of rectitude in our intentions, and an humble hope of approbation from the Supreme Disposer of all things.

I have communicated to Colonel Humphreys that paragraph of your letter which announces the favourable reception his poem has met with in France. Upon the principles I have just laid down, he cannot be indifferent to the applauses of so enlightened a na-

tion, nor to the suffrages of the King and Queen, who have been pleased to honour it with their Royal approbation.

We have no news on this side the Atlantic, worth the pains of sending across it. The country is recovering rapidly from the ravages of war; the seeds of population are scattered far in the wilderness; agriculture is prosecuted with industry; the works of peace, such as opening rivers, building bridges, &c. are carried on with spirit; trade is not so successful as we could wish: our state governments are well administered; some objects in our federal government might perhaps be altered for the better. I rely much on the goodness of my countrymen, and trust that a superintending Providence will disappoint the hopes of our enemies.

With sentiments of the sincerest friendship,

I am, my dear Marquis,

Your obedient and affectionate servant,

(Signed)

GEO. WASHINGTON.

MARQUIS DE CHASTELLUX.

Mount Vernon, April 25, 1788.

MY DEAR MARQUIS,

IN reading your very friendly and acceptable letter of the 21st December, 1787, which came to hand by the last mail, I was, as you may well suppose, not less delighted than surprised to come across the plain American word "my wife." A wife! well.

my dear Marquis, I can hardly refrain from smiling to find that you are caught at last. I saw by the eulogium you often made on the happiness of domestic life in America, that you had swallowed the bait, and that you would as surely be taken, (one day or other,) as you was a philosopher and a soldier. So your day has at length come: I am glad of it with all my heart and soul. It is quite good enough for you; now you are well served for coming to fight in favour of the American Rebels, all the way across the Atlantic Ocean, by catching that terrible contagion, which, like the small-pox, or the plague, a man can only have once in his life, because it lasts him, (at least with us in America—I don't know how you manage these matters in France,) for his life-time. And yet after all the maledictions you so richly merit on the subject, the worst wish I can find it in my heart to make against Madame de Chastellux and yourself is, that you may neither of you get the better of this same domestic felicity during the course of your mortal existence. If so wonderful an event should have occasioned me, my dear Marquis, to have written you in a strange style, you will understand me as clearly as if I had said, (what in plain English is the simple truth,) do me the justice to believe that I take a heartfelt interest in whatever concerns your happiness. And in this view I sincerely congratulate you on your auspicious matrimonial connexion. I am happy to find that Madame de Chastellux is so intimately connected with the Duchess of Orleans, as I have always understood that this noble lady was an illustrious pattern of cou-

nubial love, as well as an excellent model of virtue in general.

While you have been making love under the banner of Hymen, the great personages of the North have been making war under the inspiration, or rather infatuation, of Mars. Now, for my part, I humbly conceive, you had much the best and wisest of the bargain; for certainly it is more consonant to all the principles of reason and religion, (natural and revealed,) to replenish the earth with inhabitants, rather than to depopulate it by killing those already in existence; besides, it is time for the age of knight-errantry, and mad heroism, to be at an end. Your young military men, who want to reap the harvest of laurels, don't care, I suppose, how many seeds of war are sown; but, for the sake of humanity, it is devoutly to be wished, that the manly employment of agriculture, and the humanizing benefits of commerce, would supersede the waste of war, and the rage of conquest, that the swords might be turned into ploughshares, the spears into pruning-hooks, and, as the scripture expresses it, the nations learn war no more.

I will now give you a little news from this side the Atlantic, and then finish. As for us, we are plodding on in the dull road of peace and politics. We who live in these ends of the earth only hear of the rumours of war, like the roar of distant thunder. It is to be hoped our remote local situation will prevent us from being swept into its vortex.

The Constitution which was proposed by the Federal Convention, has been adopted by the States

of Massachusetts, Connecticut, Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware and Georgia: no state has rejected it. The Convention of Maryland is now sitting, and will probably adopt it, as that of South-Carolina will do in May. The other Conventions will assemble early in the summer. Hitherto there has been much greater unanimity in favour of the proposed government, than could have reasonably been expected. Should it be adopted, and I think it will be, America will lift up her head again, and in a few years become respectable among the nations. It is a flattering and consoling reflection that our rising republic has the good wishes of all the Philosophers, Patriots, and virtuous men in all nations, and that they look upon us as a kind of asylum for mankind. God grant that we may not be disappointed in our honest expectations by our folly and perverseness! With sentiments of the purest attachment and esteem,

I have the honour to be,

My dear Marquis,

Your most obedient and humble Servant,

(Signed)

GEO. WASHINGTON.

MARQUIS CHASTELLUX.

P. S. If the Duke de Lauzun is still with you, I beg you will thank him in my name, for his kind remembrance of me, and make my compliments to him.

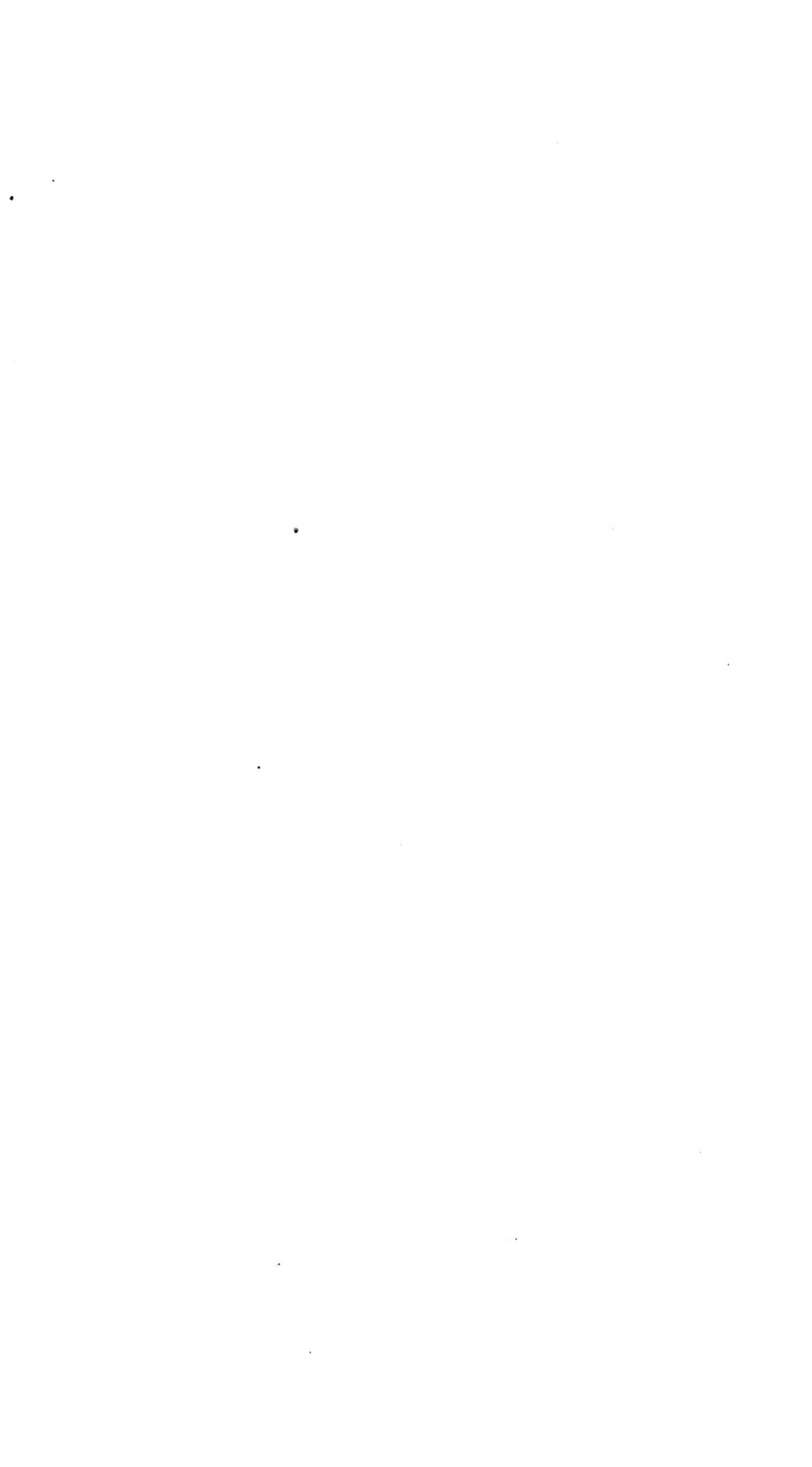
May 1st. Since writing the above, I have been favoured with a duplicate of your letter, in the handwriting of a lady, and cannot close this without acknowledging my obligations to the flattering post-

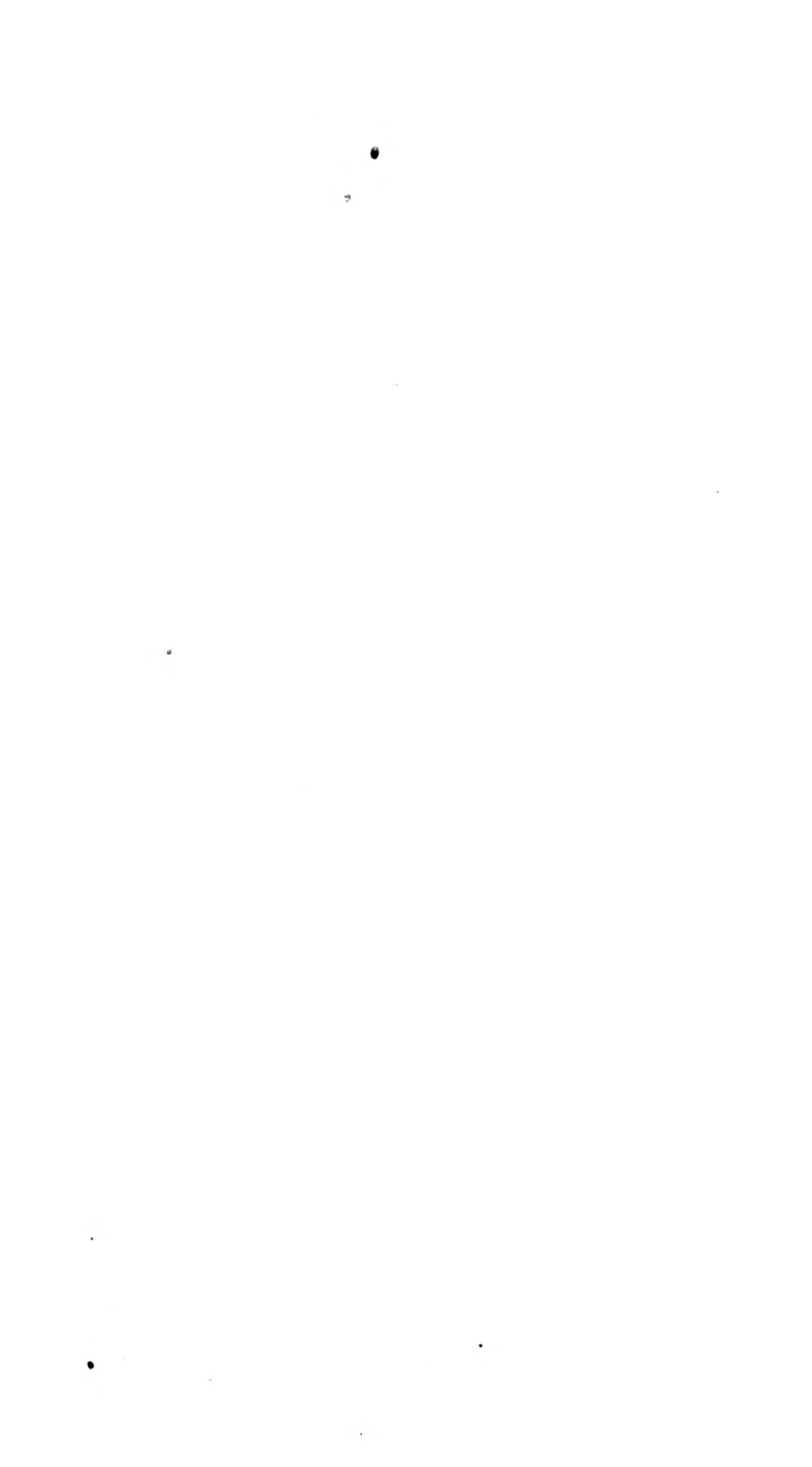
script of the fair transcriber. In effect, my dear Marquis, the characters of this interpreter of your sentiments, are so much fairer than those through which I have been accustomed to decipher them, that I already consider myself as no small gainer by your matrimonial connexion, especially as I hope that your amiable amanuensis, will not forget at some times to add a few annotations of her own, to your original text. I have just received information that the Convention of Maryland has ratified the proposed Constitution, by a majority of 63 to 11.

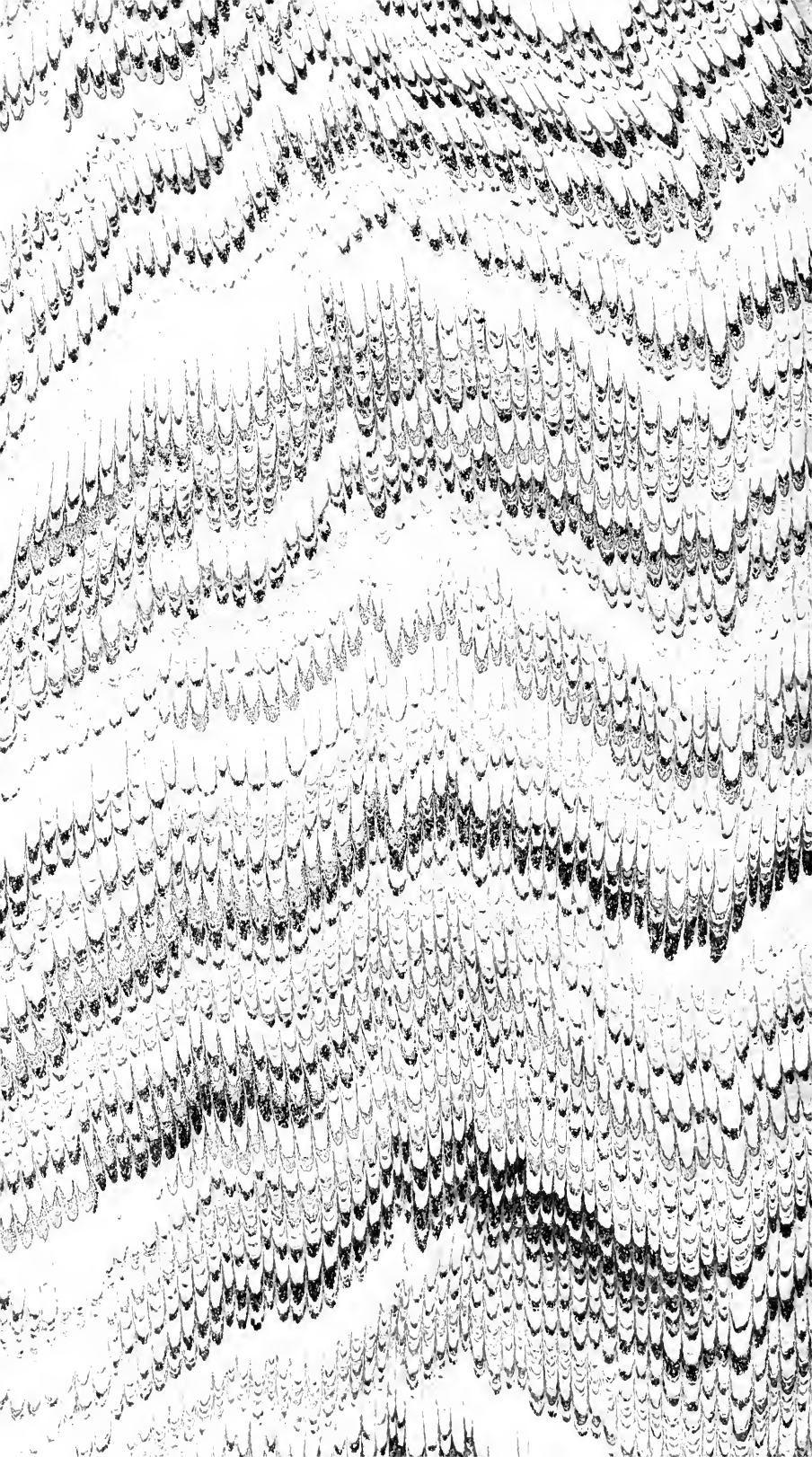
Note. The haste in which the copy in the Library was transcribed has caused some errors.

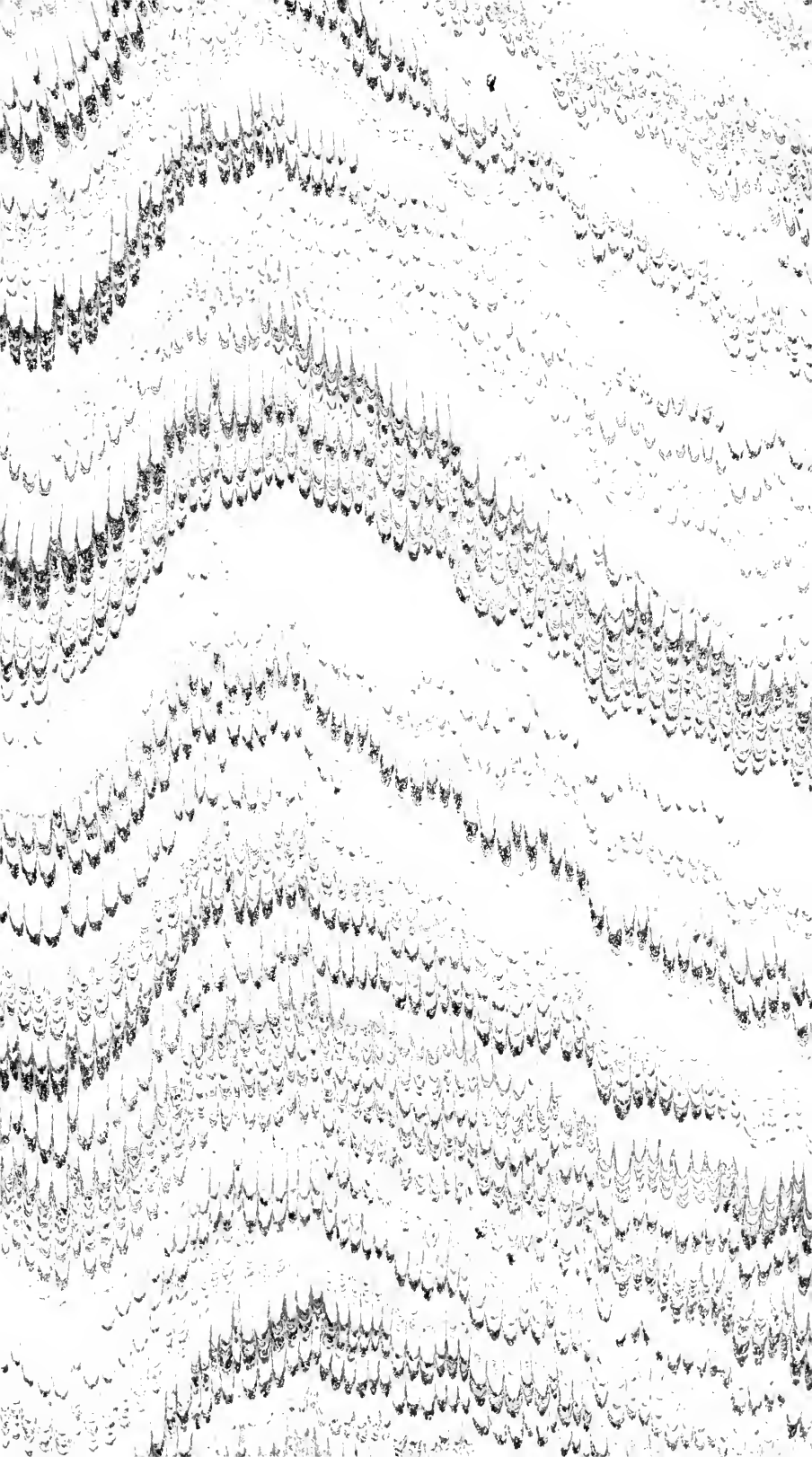












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