

A LETTER FROM THE VIRGINIA LOYALIST
JOHN RANDOLPH TO THOMAS JEFFERSON
WRITTEN IN LONDON IN 1779

BY LEONARD L. MACKALL

WHEN our President asked me to read a paper to-day, no doubt he hoped that I would produce one of those elaborately documented compositions, consisting of a quasi-legible text resting cautiously on a reinforced concrete foundation of bibliographical notes and other ballast, of which I have been guilty in print on various occasions and in very various fields. But this time circumstances have combined to prevent such a consummation—whether devoutly to be wished or not—and so, even at the risk of a great gain in interest, I shall take but a few moments of your time by reading what seems a very interesting and hitherto entirely unknown letter to Jefferson, written by his kinsman¹ and friend, John Randolph, not “of Roanoke,” but the Loyalist Attorney-General of Virginia, father of Edmund Randolph, the Patriot.

With rare exceptions, Latin quotations are no longer well received in polite society, but it is still customary for bibliophiles to cite the words of old Terentianus Maurus: “Habent sua fata libelli;” and it is well known that the fate of manuscripts is often still more strange than that of books. The present document qualifies in both classes.

Several years ago a catalogue of a well-known London firm dealing in books and manuscripts offered

¹John Randolph's father, Sir John Randolph, was a brother of Isham Randolph, whose daughter Jane was the mother of Thomas Jefferson.

two copies of Tucker's *Life of Jefferson* (London, 1837,) the first being described² as: "With a long A. L. S., 5 pp., 4 to, from John Randolph to Thomas Jefferson, on the affairs of the period (1773 [sic] inserted"; and hence priced at 12s. 6d.—or 4s. more than the other! So I ordered the expensive copy, and was indeed much surprised when I received it and read the letter (which was loosely inserted and readily detached.)

Our John Randolph is described in Wirt's *Patrick Henry*³ as "in person and manners among the most elegant gentlemen in the colony, and in his profession, one of the most splendid ornaments of the bar. He was a polite scholar, as well as a profound lawyer, and his eloquence also was of a high order. His voice, action, style, were stately, and uncommonly impressive, . . . gigantic as he was in relation to other men" [except Patrick Henry in criminal cases]. As the (last) Royal Attorney-General of Virginia, he considered that his oath of office and his honor required him to support the Royal policy and the Royal Governor, Lord Dunmore, who indeed reported to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, in Dec. 1774, that: "there are but too few even of the Council, and only the King's Attorney-General of all the Officers of Govt. who have discovered the least disposition to aid govt., contenting themselves with not subscribing associations, but at the same time adhering strictly to them and therefore giving encouragement to them."⁴

In short Randolph was a conscientious Royalist and

²No. 1255 in Catalogue 292 (June, 1912) of Maggs Bros.

³*Sketches of the Life & c. of Patrick Henry* by Wm. Wirt, Phila. 1817, p. 74.

⁴Dunmore's despatch, Williamsburg (Va.), Dec. 24, 1774, in Public Record Office, London, as no. 23 in C. O. 5/1353, page 59. (formerly: S. P. O. Va. 195). From the Geo. Bancroft Transcripts (N. Y. Public Library), Virginia Papers (Series II) vol. II (1768-75) p. 527 the above passage was used for a paraphrase in Chas. R. Lingley's *The Transition in Va. from Colony to Commonwealth* (Columbia Univ. Studies in History, Economics & c., vol. 36, no. 2) N. Y. 1910, p. 118. The Secretary of the Public Record Office has now kindly compared my transcript of the Bancroft transcript with the original, and also given me the present press mark, as above.

Loyalist, one of that large group of men, many of them noble characters, whom, in spite of Sabine's book, it was the custom to simply damn with no praise at all, until the comparatively recent researches of Van Tyne and others at length inaugurated a fairer method of procedure.

One of the more recent and most valuable publications in this whole field is unfortunately little known and but rarely accessible, since it was privately printed, not for sale, and (as I have only just succeeded in ascertaining) the edition was limited to one hundred copies, all told. I refer to Mrs. Whitelaw Reid's handsome quarto: *The Royal Commission on the Losses and Services of American Loyalists 1783 to 1785 being the Notes of Mr. Daniel Parker Coke, M. P., one of the Commissioners during that period. Edited by Hugh Edward Egerton, Beit Professor of Colonial History in the University of Oxford. Oxford, printed for Presentation to the Members of The Roxburghe Club, 1915, pp. lv, 422.*⁵ Mrs. Reid not only printed this volume in memory of her husband (a member of the Roxburghe Club), but she also gave the original manuscripts on which it is based (from the Sir Thomas Phillipps sale of May 1913, no. 24424) to the New York Public Library. She generously presented a copy of the book to our Society also.

In connection with the claim of the Loyalist, Bernard Carey, Mrs. Reid's book carefully prints⁶

⁵With Mrs. Reid's permission, the Controller of the Univ. Press, Oxford, has answered my questions as follows (from his records): 100 copies were originally printed in April 1915; of these 55 were lost when the "Arabic" was torpedoed, Aug. 19, 1915. To replace these the whole book was entirely reset and 55 copies reprinted (finished Feb. 1916) without any change whatever, but a special printed slip was inserted, referring to the loss and the reprinting but giving no dates or figures. I have given these letters to the N. Y. Public Library, to be kept with their copy of the book. There are now (Nov. 1920) further copies of the book in the following Libraries: Harvard Univ., Mass. Hist. Soc., Boston Athenæum, Yale Univ., N. Y. Hist. Soc., Grolier Club, Am. Geographical Soc., Johns Hopkins Univ., Library of Congress, Dept. of Historical Research of the Carnegie Institution (Wash.), W. J. DeRenne Georgia Library (Savannah; cf. Ga. Historical Quarterly, II, 82), Public Archives of Canada (Ottawa). Only two of these (M. H. S. and L. C.) are recorded in J. T. Gerould's useful census of Roxburghe Club Publications in Am. Libraries (Papers & Proceedings of the Am. Library Institute, for 1917, pp. 169-178).

⁶Page 24, from MS. I, 85.

the testimony, on Oct. 30, 1783, of our John Randolph, from which it appears that he was "Chairman of a Genl. Meeting of the American Loyalists out of whom a Committee was formed for the purpose of enquiring into the Claims of the Loyalists from that Province" i. e. Virginia. It is well known that Randolph went to England in (October), 1775; and it is also well known that Randolph's fondness for Virginia remained so strong that his dying wish was that he be buried there in the Chapel of William and Mary College, by the side of his father and brother—and his daughter Mrs. Wormeley, carried out this wish, as soon as practicable after his death in 1784.

We have recently learned that Randolph studied law in London, being admitted to the Middle Temple on Apr. 8, 1745, and was duly called to the bar on Feb. 9, 1750;⁷ but almost nothing definite seems to be known about him during the whole period of his last residence in England, except that he spent some time at the Scotch house of Lord Dunmore, that he lived in straightened circumstances financially, receiving a pension of only a hundred pounds, and that he died at Brompton, London, Jan. 31, 1784. He was born in Virginia in 1727.

In the opinion of Washington he was probably the real author of those spurious *Letters from General Washington to several of his Friends in the Year 1776. In which are set forth a fairer and fuller View of American Politics than ever yet transpired, Or the Public could be made acquainted with through any other Channel.* published by J. Bew, London, in May or June, 1777, soon reprinted in America, and now accessible in Worthington C. Ford's standard *Writings of Washington*, and better still in his admirable later⁸

⁷cf. C. E. A. Bedwell's list of Am. Middle Templars, in *Am. Hist. Rev.* XXV, 683 (July 1920).

⁸The Spurious Letters attributed to Washington, with a Bibliographical Note by Worthington Chauncey Ford, Brooklyn, N. Y.: Privately Printed, 1889, pp. 166; 500 copies printed. The remainder of this publication of the Historical Printing Club is now for sale by the N. Y. Public Library.

separate edition with a valuable preface and full notes quoting similar but genuine passages. The object of this book was of course to show Washington's fondness for the mother country, or, as Washington himself expressed it⁹ "to paint his inclinations as at variance with his professions and his duty;" but Col. Tench Tilghman, then in his military family and "well known to possess Washington's confidence" recorded in writing in 1778 that he suspected "Jack Randolph for the author, as the letters contain a knowledge of his family affairs that none but a Virginian could be acquainted with. The sentiments are noble, and such as the General himself often expresses. I have heard him declare a thousand times, and he does it every day in the most public company, that independence was farthest of anything from his thoughts, and that he never entertained the idea until he plainly saw that absolute conquest was the aim, and unconditional submission the terms which Great Britain meant to grant.¹⁰"

Historians can scarcely regard any forgery as a permissible means to any end, and yet, if Randolph did write the spurious Washington letters, his intentions were no doubt really good. For he constantly had much at heart the hope of a reconciliation between England and America, and the earnest desire to aid in bringing it about as soon as possible. Ford calls attention to a manuscript at Drayton House, Northamptonshire, in the possession of the family of Lord George Germaine, dated 4 August, 1780, unsigned but endorsed "Mr. Randolph's Plan of Accomodation" as being "undoubtedly drawn up and submitted to the British ministry by the loyalist

⁹This expression is here quoted from Washington's formal repudiation of the spurious letters in the form of a letter to the then Sec. of State, Timothy Pickering, dated: 3 March 1797. Ford (*Sp. Letters*, p. 26) says that it "is written by Timothy Pickering, and merely signed by the President." Various other comments by Washington to similar effect are also quoted by Ford, e. g. pp. 11, 13, 15, 24, 26.

¹⁰Tench Tilghman to James Tilghman, Valley Forge, 24 April 1778, quoted by Ford, *Writings of Washington IV*, 134, and *Spurious Letters* p. 32.

refugee from Virginia."¹¹ Some such political accommodation was the avowed object of the letter of 1779, which I am about to read. Randolph may also have written the anonymous pamphlet *Considerations on the Present State of Virginia, Printed in the Year M,DCC,LXXIV*, just reprinted by the Bibliographer of Virginia, Earl Gregg Swem,¹² from the only known copy (in the New York Public Library) on the title-page of which his name as author is written in an apparently contemporary hand. Randolph's 1779 letter says "I put my own thoughts in Writing that I might see how they would stand on paper," but it makes no mention of their publication. Is not this omission perhaps significant? There is at least no striking resemblance between the letter and the (earlier) pamphlet.

Though Jefferson was seventeen years younger than Randolph, they had been very intimate friends for many years, and he remained a close friend of the family after Randolph's death. In 1771 Jefferson recorded in amusingly ultra-formal style an agreement with Randolph whereby, if Jefferson died first, then Randolph was to get £800 worth of Jefferson's books; but if Randolph died first, then Jefferson was to get Randolph's violin and music or £60 worth of his books! When they approached the parting of the political ways Jefferson wrote to Randolph, 25 Aug. 1775; "Looking with fondness towards a reconciliation with Grt. Britain, I cannot help hoping you may

¹¹Ford, Sp. Letters p. 34. No doubt the reference is to Report of the Historical MSS. Commission, 9th Report, Part III, Appendix (1884) p. 103. The new edition entitled: Hist. MSS. Comm. Report on the MSS. in the possession of Mrs. Stopford-Sackville of Drayton House, Northamptonshire, vol. II (1910) p. 174 states further that the Randolph MS (marked also "Brompton Row") forms 22 pages.

¹²Considerations on the Present State of Virginia, attributed to John Randolph, Attorney General, and Considerations on the Present State of Virginia Examined by Robert Carter Nicholas, Edited by Earl Gregg Swem, Assist. Librarian, Va. State Libr., Sixty-three copies printed for Charles F. Heartman, in New York City, 1919 (Heartman's Historical Series No. 32). Swem's Preface refers to Va. Mag. of Hist. & Biogr. XV, 149 (Oct. 1907) besides Conway's Edm. Randolph, and the Recollections of Ralph Randolph Wormeley, Rear-Admiral, R. N., N. Y. 1879 (priv. pr.) cf. also Am. Hist. Ass. Ann. Rept. for 1892 p. 115.

be able to contribute towards expediting the good work." and "It would be certainly unwise, by trying the event of another campaign, to risk our accepting foreign aid, which, perhaps, may not be obtainable, but on condition of everlasting avulsion from Great Britain. This would be thought a hard condition, to those who still wish for reunion with their parent country. I am sincerely one of those, and would rather be in dependence on Great Britain, properly limited, than on any other nation on earth, or than on no nation. But I am one of those, too, who rather than submit to the rights of legislation for us, assumed by the British parliament, and which late experience has shown they will so cruelly exercise, would lend my hand to sink the whole Island in the ocean." Later, on Nov. 29, 1775, when Randolph had sailed at last for England, Jefferson wrote to him again, but more sternly. Both these letters were printed in Jefferson's *Writings* in 1829, and are now so readily accessible as to make further quotation here superfluous.

Randolph's Loyalist attitude of course made him intensely unpopular with the Virginia patriots. Mrs. Randolph assures us¹³ that "Americans did come down to Williamsburg with an intent to hang him, but were prevented: He had done everything in his power to oppose their measures;" and the new 1779 letter refers expressly to "the Insults I receiv'd" and "the unmanly & illiberal Treatment, which the more delicate Part of my Family met with"—which shows that his wife and two daughters had not been spared. It is therefore a real tribute to Randolph's high

¹³Page 611 of vol. 58 (from vol. 54 of the originals) of the N. Y. Public Library Transcripts of the Audit Office (P. R. O.) papers on Am. Loyalist claims. cf. C. M. Andrews, *Guide to the Materials for Am. Hist. to 1783 in the Public Record Office*, II, 259-263 (Carnegie Institution, Wash. 1914). Pp. 607-616 give the Memorial of Mrs. Ariana Randolph, dated Feb. 20, 1784, and also her Evidence on Jan. 31, 1786. I have accepted her statement that her husband quitted Virginia in Oct. 1775 and arrived in England in Nov., but the further statement that he died on June 30, 1784 is certainly a clerical error, for the *Gentleman's Magazine* of Feb. 1784 (p. 152) recorded his death at Brompton on Jan. 31st, as usually given. Possibly Jan. 30th may be the correct date. He must have been dead *before* her Memorial was written, Feb. 20th.

character and manliness that when it was feared that Lord Dunmore might send to Mt. Vernon to seize the wife of the new American Commander-in-Chief, Lund Washington wrote to the General: "Surely her old acquaintance, the Attorney, who with his family is on board his ship, would prevent his doing any act of that kind."¹⁴

We now come at last to the new letter from Randolph to Jefferson, written in October, 1779. I need merely add that the original cover is addressed to: "His Excellency Thomas Jefferson Esq. Governor of Virginia," and that the MS. is accompanied by a memorandum dated April 23^d, 1840, reading: "I found this letter amongst the papers of Sir Edward Walpole K. B., directed to His Excellency Thomas Jefferson, &c." and signed: J. W. Keppel. Evidently it had never left England, and remained there unknown.

The actual words are new, but the sentiments sound, *mutatis mutandis*, strangely similar to much that has been written during the present War.

Dear S^r.

The Letters, with which you some considerable Time ago, honour'd me, got to Hand; tho' from their appearance, their Contents were known to many, before they reach'd the Person, for whom they were intended. The gloomy Cloud, which hung over our public affairs, & the general Suspicion, which prevail'd at that Time, recommended Caution, & prevented my answering them. But, as matters *now* are fully understood, & the Ultimatum seems to be fix'd between the contending Parties; if *You* are not unwilling to read, *I* am under no Apprehension, in delivering my Sentiments to you.

¹⁴Ford's Writings of Washington III,278;also in Sparks III,196 (who reads:"an act"). Probably it was the fact that Randolph and his family were on the same ship with Lord Dunmore at this time which led to the current statement that they all returned to England together. As noted above Mrs. Randolph testified that her husband and family had left Virginia in Oct. 1775, but Dunmore remained there for many months longer, as is proved by numerous documents.

Mr. J. Power,¹⁵ who is just arriv'd from Virginia, informs me, that you have been lately elected Successor to Mr Henry, who presided over your Colony for three Years, the utmost successive Time allow'd for holding that office. I must take the Liberty to say, that your Constituents could not have chosen a man of greater abilities to conduct their affairs, than you possess; & permit me to add my Hope, that Futurity may speak as favourably of your Moderation.

If a Difference in opinion, was a good Ground for an Intermission of Friendship, Mankind might justly be said to live in a State of Warfare; since the Imperfection of human knowledge, has render'd Mens Minds as various, as the Author of their Being has shap'd their Persons. The Man who condemns another, for thinking differently from himself, sets up his Judgment as the Standard of Conception; wounds the great Liberty we enjoy, of thinking for ourselves; & tyrannizes over the Mind, which Nature intended should be free & unconfin'd. *That Tyrant*, I can not suppose *You*, to be. The Liberality of Sentiment, which ever distinguish'd you amongst your acquaintance, when you were upon a Level with them, has not I hope, forsaken you since you have been rais'd to a Sphere, which has made you, superior to them. Should I therefore be so unfortunate, as to make any observations, which may not meet with your approbation, for the Honour of your Understanding, treat them with Benignity. I will allow you in such Case, to consider them, as the overflowings of a mind, too zealous in the Cause in which it is engaged; but I must demand of you to admit, that they are the legitimate offspring, of an uncorrupted Heart. But, before you pass Sentence, I shall call on your Candour, to give them a fair Hearing.

When our unhappy Dispute commenc'd, (tho it arose from Circumstances, which left an opening for an honourable accomodation, yet) I saw that it was big with Mischief, & portended Ruin & Desolation, *Somewhere*. I thought that it behov'd me to reflect with the utmost Deliberation, on the Line of Conduct, which I ought to pursue, on so critical an Occasion. I clear'd every avenue to Information, & laid myself open to Conviction, let it come from what Quarter it

¹⁵Evidently this is "Jack Power, Esq.," of Tappahannock, Essex Co., who left Va. in June 1779 and arrived in London in Oct., via Holland, according to his Memorial & Evidence among the Audit Office papers on Am. Loyalist claims. cf. N. Y. Public Library Transcripts vol. 59, pp. 98-105 (from vol. 56 of the original) cf. note 13, above. Power states that he had practised law from 1763 to 1774 when his practice had ceased due to his unpopularity as Loyalist; and that he lost "a very good Library and Book cases supposed at £200." He appears as witness in the Reid Roxburghe Club vol. p. 35 from MS. I, 135. Perhaps he was related to James Power on whom there is a note in the Va. Mag. of Hist. & Biogr. XV, 381 (April 1908).

wou'd. I read with avidity every thing which was published on the Subject & I put my own Thoughts in Writing, that I might see how they wou'd stand on Paper. I found myself embarrass'd by a thousand Considerations, acting in direct opposition to each other. In this Situation I had no Resource left but to submit myself solely to the Dictates of my Reason. To that impartial tribunal I appeal'd. *There* I receiv'd Satisfaction; & from her Decision, I am determin'd never to depart.

Si fractus illabatur Orbis,
Impavidum ferient Ruinae¹⁶

Adversity is a School, in which few Men wish to be educated; yet, it is a Source, from whence the most useful Improvements, may be derived. When the Mind shrinks not from its approach, it offers a Season for Reflection, calls forth the Powers of the Understanding fixes its Principles & inspires a Fortitude, which shews the true Dignity of Man. In that School I have been tutored; from its Tuition I have drawn those advantages; & I am unalterably resolved, that all other Motives shall give way, to the fullest & most *unequivocal* Enjoyment of them.

The Insults I receiv'd from a People (whose Interest I always considered as my own)—unrestrained by the Influence of Gentlemen of Rank gave me much Uneasiness: But, the unmanly & illiberal Treatment, which the more delicate Part of my Family met with, I confess, fill'd me with the highest Resentment. As there is Nothing which I forget so soon as an Injury; & as animosity never rankles in my Bosom, I have cast the whole into oblivion. There let it lie buried; for Implacability belongs only to the unworthy.

Independence, it is agreed on all Hands, is the fix'd Purpose of your Determination. Annihilation is preferable to a Reunion with Great Britain. To support this desirable End, you have enter'd into an alliance with France & Spain, to reduce the Power of this Country, & make Way for the Glory of America. What effect this Connection will have on you, or this Kingdom, Time alone can discover; But be it rememberd, that France is perfidious, Spain insignificant, & Great Britain formidable. The united Fleets of the House of Bourbon, lately cover'd the Seas, & paraded off Plymouth. A Descent was threaten'd, & universally expected. The british Fleet was then in a distant Part of the Channel, & there was nothing remain'd to defend this Kingdom, but the internal Strength & Valour of its Inhabitants. The Space of three Days remov'd the alarm, by producing a fruitless Departure

¹⁶Horace, Carmina, Bk. 3, Ode 3, lines 7, 8.

of this mighty Squadron. Soon after this, the two fleets came in Sight of each other, (a great Superiority in Number lying on the Side of the Enemy) & a bloody Carnage was expected to follow. The british Fleet in the Evening, form'd themselves into a Line of Battle & brought to, imagining that the combin'd Fleet, wou'd in the Morning begin the attack; but when that Period arrived, there was not an Enemy to be seen, from any one of our Ships. On which, our Fleet steer'd into Port, & there has continued unmolested, ever since. Individual Ships have been taken, but all our valuable Fleets from every Quarter of the Globe, for the present year, are arriv'd in Safety; yet, our Ports are filled with French & Spanish Ships, & our Gaols with their Subjects.

Admiral Keppels Engagement off Brest about 15 months ago, tho' a shameful one, as he had it in his Power to strike a Decisive Blow & omitted it, was converted into a meer Party Business here. His Conduct is now, very generally reprobated; Thé City of London has withheld the Golden Box, which the Rage of Party had prepared as a Present for him. Yet ill as he is supposed to have behav'd, the french Fleet sustain'd such Damage on that Occasion, that it did not come out of Port, for near a twelve Month after. History does not furnish us with Instances of greater acts of Heroism, than have been exhibited in the Course of the last Summer, in some of our naval Engagements. National Party is very much on the Decline, & the Safety of the State, seems to supercede all other Considerations.

The Junction of the Spaniards, was more a matter of Joy in England, than a Terror. The fingering of their Gold, is no small object with a commercial People. When his Catholic Majesty's Rescript was deliver'd at St. James's; & became known, instead of lowering, the Stocks immediately took a Rise. And the Dutch, who have already an immense Property in our Funds are still buying in, notwithstanding the various Difficulties, with which this Kingdom is surrounded. This Sr is a Short, but true Narrative of the State of british affairs, in Europe.

It must be confess'd, that the French have gain'd advantages in the West Indies; but it may be observ'd, that they have recover'd no more than what they lost in the last war. In Contests between great Nations, Events must be uncertain, & no Party can expect an uninterrupted Series of Success. Disappointments sometimes beget Exertions, which may give a new Face to affairs. When the Troops, which are to be sent for the Protection of our Islands, arrive, & the Ships are on float, which the succeeding Spring will produce, there will unfold to us, Truths, about which, we at present, may form

very different Ideas. The French may boast of their Prowess in Destaings Engagement with Barrington, but few think here, that the Glory of the british Navy was in any Degree diminished in that Encounter.

How far the French have been useful to you in America, you must be better qualified to determine, than myself: Yet, I cannot avoid expressing my Wish, that you had never entered into any Engagements with them. They are a People cover'd with Guile, & their Religion countenances the Practice of it on all of a different Persuasion. They are educated in an Aversion to the English & hold our Constitution in the utmost Detestation. They have the art to insinuate, & the Wickedness to betray when they gain an admittance. Laws they have none, but such as are prescrib'd by the Will of their Prince. This is their only Legislature. They know your Coast, are acquainted with your Manners, & no Doubt have made Establishments amongst you, A Footing in ye Northern Province is what they most devoutly wish to obtain. As a means to effect their Purpose, they have suffered you to run in Debt to them, & as a Security for the Payment of it, they say that your Lands are answerable. If you are not able to satisfy their Demands, how will you have it in your Power to frustrate this Claim? But if you are able to discharge the Debt, how will you recompense them, for the Services, which they will urge that they have rendered to you. Your Trade is of no Consequence, it is not an object with them. Nothing but a Partition of your Country will silence them. When that happens, you may bid adieu to all social Happiness; the little Finger of France will be more burthensome to you, than the whole weight of George the 3^d his Lords & Commons. Can it be imagin'd that a Prince, who is a Tyrant in his own Dominions, can be a Friend to the Rights & Privileges of another People? Can it be Policy in him to waste his Blood Treasure, in reducing one Rival in order to raise another, more formidable perhaps, than his ancient Competitor? Your good Sense I am persuaded, will not suffer you to cherish such an opinion, & you cannot be so wanting in Discernment, as not to see the base Design of this treacherous Nation. If France engaged in this Quarrel, for no other Purpose, than to fight your Battles, & vindicate your injured Rights, her Generosity will lead her to confer all the Benefit of her Conquests, on you. When you become invested with the possession of their acquisitions, you may then believe them to be your Friends, but until that happens, you ought to consider their Designs as dangerous, & not suffer yourselves to be deceived by such an artful & despotic People. But let us suppose in theory, what, facts I am convinced will not verify, that the Powers now contending

with G. Britain are too great for it to withstand. What do you imagine will be the Sentiments of the other States of Europe on this Subject? These Potentates stand in such a Relation to each other, that as a Security to the whole, a Ballance of Power must be preserv'd amongst them. G. Britain has always held that Ballance. How dangerous a Neighbour w'd France become, if her principal opponent & the great arbiter of Europe should be overwhelm'd? The Empress of Russia sees with a jealous eye, the strides which the French are taking towards universal Monarchy. The King of Prussia is too old a soldier, to suffer a Rival to strengthen himself, on the Ruins of an old & natural ally. The Dutch are govern'd too much by their Interest to see it in Danger, & never to make an effort to preserve it. The Danes are the fast Friends of England. All these Nations wou'd have taken a decided Part long before this, had the Situation of G. Britain made it necessary: But the Truth is, our Councils are as vigorous, our Resources as great & the national Firmness as inflexible, as they have ever been, even in the most flourishing Periods recorded in the History of this Country. If you regard the assertions of a set of men, who are distinguish'd by the appellation of *the Opposition*, you must I own form a different opinion, from that which I have endeavour'd to inculcate. They will tell you that the Glory of England is pass'd away, its Treasures exhausted, & that the Kingdom stands on the Brink of inevitable Destruction, owing to the weakness & wickedness of administration. Believe not, my Friend, such Prophets. The Luxury of this Nation, & of Course its Expenses, are unbounded. These Excesses must unavoidably make Mankind necessitious. The Department of a Minister, is lucrative & alluring. The King, in order to silence the Clamour of Party, having frequently chang'd his Servants, has by this means excited an Idea, that Noise will always procure a Removal of the Ministry. It is for this Reason, that they who have a Chance for the Sucession, ring such alarms thro the Nation, in order to throw an odium on them, & get them out of their Places; yet these very People who are the authors of so much Turbulence, don't think as they speak. Some join in the Cry; others suspend their opinions, till they receive more convincing Proofs; & a third, thinking that Government ought to be supported strengthen as far as they can, the Hand of their Rulers. But still, the great Machine moves on, the Ministry keep their Places, & look as if their Possession w'd be of long Duration. But a Change wou'd be of little Service to the Nation; for if it silenc'd one Party, it would open the Mouth of another; &

the Kingdom be just in the same Situation that it is in, at this Time, & has been for many years past.

If you form an opinion of our public affairs, by the Picture which is drawn of them in our daily Exhibitions, I acknowledge, that you must conceive my account of them to be, chimerical. But whoever wishes to avoid Error, must steer clear of an english Newspaper. There are of daily Papers publish'd in the year, 27. Millions. The Types, the Ink, the Paper & a Stamp distinctly pay a Duty to Government. Judge then what a Revenue these Publications must produce. It is for this Reason, that Ministry throw no Impediment in their Way; for punishing the Libels they contain, wou'd reduce their Number, & lessen of Course, the Emoluments arising from them. I have often thought, that the Toleration of such indecent Compositions, was a Reflection on Government but it is a Maxim in England, that as soon as Evil produces Good, it ceases to be an Evil.

The short Representation of the british affairs, which I have given you above, is intended to prepare you, for one important Question, momentous not only to America, & Great Britain, but to Europe in General: Wou'd it not be prudent, to rescind your Declaration of Independence, be happily reunited to your ancient & natural Friend, & enjoy a Peace which I most religiously think w'd pass all Understanding? I can venture to assure you, that your Independence, will never be acknowledg'd by the Legislative Authority of this Kingdom: The nation w'd not agree to such a Concession; & your suppos'd Friends who are so lavish in your Praise on other occasions, wou'd on this, be against you. Every Immunity, which you can reasonably ask for, will be granted to you; the rapacious Hand of Taxation will never reach you. Your Laws & Regulations will be establish'd on the solid Basis of the british Constitution; & your Happiness will be attended to, with all the Solitude, which belongs to an affectionate Parent. Reflect, I beseech you, on what I have said. Let not the flattering Possession of Power, which may be wrested from you in a Moment, stand in Competition with the Good of your Country, which you have now an opportunity of making, as lasting as Time itself. But if you still persist in your Resolution, never to listen to the voice of Reconciliation, Remember, that I, who know your Situation, & wish you every Degree of Happiness, tell you, that what you take to be the End, will be only the Beginning of your political misfortunes.

I must now put a Period to a long letter, the writing of which, is a very unusual Labour to me. How you may receive it I know not. Be that as it will, I shall enjoy one Consolation, which is, a quiet Conscience. I see such Determination in

Government, to proceed to the last Extremity with you; such a Disposition in the Powers of Europe to go to War; & such Mischiefs hovering over America, that I shou'd think myself an Undutiful Son, & criminally guilty, if I did not impart to you, the Distress I feel on your account. Let our opinions vary as they will, I shall nevertheless retain a very sincere Regard for you. How far your Politics may be blended with your Friendships, I cannot tell; but as I have ever preserv'd my Esteem from improper Mixtures, I shall subscribe myself, now as I always have done,

D^r. S^r.

Your very affectionate Friend &
humble Serv't

JOHN RANDOLPH

London.
Cannon Coffee House
Spring Gardens,
October 25, 1779

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