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NEWS OF THE YORKTOWN CAMPAIGN

The Journal of Dr. Robert Honyman, April 17-November 25, 1781

edited by RICHARD K. MACMASTER*

ON April 25, 1781, Lieutenant General Lord Cornwallis and the British army under his command left Wilmington, North Carolina, and began a march northward into Virginia. They reached Petersburg on May 20, 1781, and effected a junction with a smaller British force commanded by Benedict Arnold. Their final Virginia campaign ended with the surrender at Yorktown.

News of the Yorktown campaign reached distant parts of Virginia with surprising speed and accuracy. Dr. Robert Honyman, a Scottish physician residing in Hanover County, learned details of troop movements and relative strengths in men and material within a remarkably short time after an engagement or strategic withdrawal.

Honyman was a careful observer, who had begun early in 1776 to keep a daily or weekly record of military, political, and economic trends in wartime Virginia. In the early years of the war, Honyman relied heavily on the *Virginia Gazette* for information recorded in his "book of annals." When the marches and countermarches of Cornwallis and Lafayette made the publication and distribution of a newspaper nearly impossible in Virginia, Dr. Honyman was obliged to ferret out news of the Yorktown campaign by questioning neighbors and interviewing participants. His journal is an indication that Virginians were generally well informed in the spring and summer of 1781. Rumors and exaggerated reports are rare and, when they do appear, immediately corrected.

During the Virginia campaign, Dr. Honyman resided at Benjamin

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Brown's Ordinary in Hanover County. This tavern was located between the North Anna and the Little River, on the main road leading from Anderson's Bridge on the North Anna to Ground Squirrel Bridge over the South Anna. Methodist preachers frequently stopped at Brown's on their missionary journeys through Virginia. The Reverend Nelson Reed preached there several times in 1779 and Bishop Francis Asbury stayed at Brown's in 1780.¹

Honyman drew some of the information for his journal from travelers who stopped at Brown's Ordinary, but he was generally more selective in his sources. He frequently called on General Thomas Nelson, whose Hanover County estates at Offley Hoo and at the Beaverdam were within four miles of Brown's Ordinary, and other neighbors in the upper part of Hanover and in Louisa County for details of troop movements and verification of reports. Dr. Honyman had been practicing medicine in Hanover County since he first came to America in 1773 and undoubtedly had many friends and acquaintances in this part of Virginia.

Robert Honyman was born on December 10, 1747, in Kinneff, Kincardineshire, Scotland, a small seaside town on the northeast coast, where his father was the Presbyterian pastor. In the parish register at Kinneff is the notation, "December 13th 1747 Mr. James Honyman, Minister of this Parish, and Mrs. Katharine Allardice had a child baptised called Robert." His paternal ancestors had served the Kinneff congregation as successive pastors since 1663. His maternal grandfather was John Allardyce, Lord Provost of Aberdeen.²

¹In his journal of a trip to New England in 1775, Honyman gave the distance from Captain Brown's to Port Royal as thirty-six miles and recorded the same mileage from Fredericksburg to Captain Brown's on his return (Philip Padelford, ed., *Colonial Panorama 1775: Dr. Robert Honyman's Journal for March and April* [San Marino, Calif., 1939], pp. 1, 77-78). The unpublished journal of the Reverend Nelson Reed in the Baltimore Conference United Methodist Historical Society Library, Lovely Lane United Methodist Church, Baltimore, Maryland, mentioned Captain Brown's tavern as a regular preaching place and located the next station on Reed's circuit at Thomas Crenshaw's on Ground Squirrel (Reed, *Journal*, fols. 19-21). Francis Asbury rode from George Arnold's house in Spotsylvania County eighteen miles to Brown's Tavern where he preached on May 7, 1780. The next day he traveled fifteen miles to Ground Squirrel (Edwin T. Clark, ed., *The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury* [London, 1958], I, 349). In Pinkney's *Virginia Gazette*, November 28, 1775, Benjamin Brown advertised "To be rented, for one year, or a term of years, a very well accustomed ordinary, with good buildings, gardens, and orchards; also four other dwelling-houses, suitable for private house-keeping. They are all in the same neighborhood, in the upper end of Hanover county, and there is plenty of good land for cultivation and pasturage to each. For terms apply to the subscriber, living at the said public house." Honyman's reference in his journal for May 28, 1781, to "the family wherein I live" would presumably be to Captain Benjamin Brown and his family at the ordinary.

²The Reverend James Honyman (1704-1780) succeeded his father, the Reverend Andrew Honyman, as pastor of Kinneff in 1733. He was married on April 11, 1738, to Katherine, daughter of Provost John Allardyce of Aberdeen. Their children were Jean, born June 16, 1739; Helen, born June 10, 1741; the Reverend James Honyman, born January 4, 1745; the Reverend John Hony-

In 1761, when he was thirteen years old, Robert Honyman left Kinneff to enter Marischal College in Aberdeen. Among his fellow students there were the Virginians George, William, and Moore Fauntleroy. In 1765 Robert Honyman received the A.B. degree from Marischal College.³ He began medical studies in 1766 at Edinburgh University, where he attended classes in anatomy, surgery, and materia medica. He received a degree from Edinburgh, for he mentioned his diploma as a Doctor of Medicine in his will. The Medical Matriculation Book is the only extant record of medical students at Edinburgh in this period, so there is no way of knowing the precise date when Honyman took his degree.⁴

After completing his medical studies, Honyman volunteered as a surgeon in the Royal Navy and served for a single cruise on board H.M.S. *Portland*.⁵ The official log kept by Captain Walter Stirling, R.N. during the *Portland's* cruise does not mention the ship's surgeon and suggests that the voyage passed almost without incident.⁶

Soon after the *Portland* returned to England, Dr. Honyman left the naval service and determined to settle in Virginia. His obituary in the *Richmond Enquirer*, May 6, 1824, indicates that he began to practice medicine in Louisa County on his arrival in America sometime in 1773 and later settled in Hanover County. Dr. Honyman was residing at Captain Brown's Ordinary in Hanover County by 1775, when he set out on a visit to his Honyman cousins in Newport, Rhode Island. The journal kept by

man, born December 11, 1745; Dr. Robert Honyman, born December 10, 1747; and Patrick Honyman, born December 14, 1751, died February 15, 1752. The Reverend James Honyman, father of the diarist, was the author of the song, "Hie, Bonnie Lassie, Blink Over the Burn" and of other songs and poems. In Kinneff Church there is a tablet erected by Dr. Robert Honyman of Virginia in memory of his family. The inscription is "In memory of Mr. James Honyman, brother to Andrew, Bishop of Orkney, and Robert, Archdean of St. Andrews, who was settled minister of this parish of Kinneff, 30th September 1663, and died 2nd May 1693, and is here interred. And of Mr. Andrew Honyman, his eldest son, who succeeded in the charge, and died 30th December 1732; and, together with his wife, Helen Rait, of the family of Finlawston, is here interred. (His younger brother Mr. James, was settled minister in Newport, Rhode Island, and left a family, one of his sons being lately Attorney-General there). And of Mr. James Honyman, his eldest son, and successor in this charge, who died 16th January 1780, aged 77 years, and is here interred with his wife Katherine Allardyce, daughter of Provost Allardyce in Aberdeen. And of Mr. James Honyman, his eldest son, who succeeded him in this charge, and died 5th August 1781, aged 36 years, and is here interred. This monument is erected by Mr. John, a dissenting clergyman in England, Dr. Robert, a physician in Virginia, and Helen, the wife of Robert Edward in Harvieston, brothers and sister of the last deceased." The text of this inscription and extracts from the registers of Kinneff Church were obtained through the Scots Ancestry Research Society, Edinburgh, Scotland.

³ P. J. Anderson, ed., *Fasti Academiae Mariscallanae Aberdonensis, New Spalding Club Publications*, vol. XVIII (Aberdeen, 1898), p. 333.

⁴ Miss Beth Brown of the Edinburgh University Library kindly supplied this information.

⁵ Dr. Robert Honyman's appointment to H.M.S. *Portland* in 1771 is in the Navy Board Appointment Book, Adm. 106/2899, Public Record Office, London. His name does not appear in the Index to Surgeon's Services for 1740-1815.

⁶ Adm. 51/710. Public Record Office, London.

Richmond yesterday in the afternoon & proceeded 10 or 12 miles on the road to Hanover Court house, having Chickahominy swamp between him & the Enemy. His force is not equal to that of the enemy, it is therefore thought he will decline a general action; & if they press upon him will retreat northerly till he is sufficiently strengthened by Militia & by Wayne's men who are on their march & expected to arrive every day. It is said the enemy have received a small reinforcement from New York within this fortnight, said to be 2 Regiments, or about 1000 men.—People are moving their Negroes, Cattle, Horses & c. from the neighbourhood of the Enemy, & from the route which it is supposed they will take. The Hardships, distress & damage at this time is unspeakable.

May 28. Last night the Marquis & his army decamped about midnight from Peter Winston's,²⁸ & took their route towards Ground Squirrel bridge;²⁹ & when they arrived at the cross roads 2 miles on the south side of the bridge, they turned to the left & took the main road to the upper end of Hanover, Goochland & Louisa. Where the enemy are we cannot exactly tell, as reports are so various, but suppose they are between Richmond & this place.—Great numbers of people have removed from this neighbourhood up to Albemarle; in particular several of the family wherein I live,³⁰ but I resolve to remain; only I have sent up my best horse, saddle & bridle to the mountains.—Reported that the Enemy's horse were at Newcastle last night. They are very strong in horse, & we very weak.³¹

I breakfasted with General Nelson this morning, who was sending off his family with great expedition, & he setting off to join the army, having the command of a brigade of Militia.³²—Distressing scenes every where.—By the best accounts we have not more than 3000 men armed in our army.

May 30. Yesterday went over to Mrs. Nicholas's,³³ in the neighbourhood of which our army; intended to have gone & seen the army; but intelligence arriving of the Enemy's Horse coming up to Hanover Court house, I set off & got home in the evening, finding the people every where dreadfully alarmed & sending off their families, Horses & most valuable effects. The

²⁸ Winston's Bridge was over the Chickahominy, south of Hanover Court House and twelve miles north of Richmond, near the home of Peter Winston.

²⁹ Ground Squirrel Bridge over the South Anna River in western Hanover County, on what is now U. S. route 33.

³⁰ One of several references to Captain Benjamin Brown and his family.

³¹ Simcoe's command passed over Chickahominy and advanced to Newcastle on May 28, where the main British force joined them the next day (Simcoe, *Military Journal*, p. 211).

³² Thomas Nelson, soon to be governor of Virginia, had moved his family from their handsome brick mansion in Yorktown to "Offley," a small frame house in Hanover, to escape the British.

³³ Mrs. Robert Carter Nicholas was living at "Mount Brilliant," later renamed "The Retreat" (E. G. and P. G. Glazebrook, *Virginia Migrations: Hanover County* [Richmond, 1943], I, iv).

Enemy's horse yesterday came up to Hanover Court house, pursuing several of our light horse, but went down towards Hanover town in the evening.³⁴ The number of their horse variously represented from 150 to 300.

This morning heard of the approach of our army, who crossed Ground Squirrel bridge yesterday & encamped near Scotch town, & having marched this morning, past by this house on their way over Anderson's bridge³⁵ about 10 or 11 o'clock this forenoon.—General Nelson's brigade of militia marched first, then Gen: Muhlenburg's, with 2 pieces of Cannon at the head of each brigade; after a small interval came the Marquis's troops, regulars (3 Regiments) marching in order with their drums, fifes & Colours. After the whole came the Baggage, & more Artillery. I believe there were 8 or 10 pieces in the whole.—About an hour after the troops had passed by, the Marquis himself came up with his attendants, but went on to join the army, though he has sent word that he is to dine here to day.* The piquet is posted here, & sentries upon the roads above & below. The Enemies' Horse this morning advanced above Hanover Courthouse several miles, & took some light horse prisoners, one of them an acquaintance of mine. We have reason to think the main body of the Enemy is about Hanover town.—There were but few horse along with our army, I believe not more than 60 properly mounted, & even these divided & in small bodies.

May 31. The Marquis's army lay near Anderson's bridge till past midnight, then decamped & returned by this house, where they turned to the right & marched up the road towards Louisa. They halted in the morning 4 or 5 miles above this place where they continue at present, about the cross roads that go to Davenport's ford & the Widow Smith's plantation.³⁶

The main body of the British were this morning at Hanover Court house; their piquets & horse several miles advanced upwards: The Horse scouring the country in every direction for many miles round the Court house.—Yesterday they were at Steele's ordinary 8 or 9 miles below this, likewise at Norvell's on the other side of the south river. To day they were on the road by Mrs. Nicholas's on their way to Rocky Mill. Small parties of Horse constantly passing up & down this road to bring intelligence. We expect their horse here to night or to morrow morning. A fearful state of expectation indeed!!!

*He did not. [*Honyman's note.*]

³⁴The Queen's Rangers were at Hanover Court House on May 29 and advanced to the bridge over the South Anna the same day (Simcoe, *Military Journal*, p. 211).

³⁵Anderson's Bridge over the North Anna River. Scotchtown, formerly the home of Patrick Henry and then of Dolley Madison, is eight miles west of Ashland and just north of state route 54.

³⁶Davenport's Ford was on the North Anna River where Hanover and Spotsylvania counties adjoin.

June 1st 11 o'clock A.M. About 2 hours ago Col: Tarleton with his Legion past by here, his light infantry mounted on horses. There seemed to be 3 or 400 men. They rode very fast, stopt but a little while & enquired the road the Marquis with his army had taken, & immediately went after them.— When I found they were British, I went out & requested Tarleton to restrain his men & protect us from injury; he promised he would, enquired about the Marquis & then rode off with the whole detachment.

Soon after they passed by, one of our horsemen came to the house, who had been posted by the Marquis at Anderson's bridge; he told us that the Marquis with his men went by Davenport's ford, & the Militia had separated from the regulars & gone to Carr's bridge. While we were talking several women belonging to the British army came riding up, & he intended to have pillaged them, but we begged he would not, & he desisted; soon after two Negroes came riding up on a horse of Jack Brown's,³⁷ which they had stolen from a pasture below. The Horseman rescued the Horse, bound the Negroes & drove them off towards Anderson's bridge.

4 o'clock P.M. A little before 12, the British Horse returned, having advanced within a mile of the Marquis's army (as they said) & drove in his piquet & killed one centinel. They stopt a little while & then rode down the road to join the main body at Steele's about 8 miles below. They said the Marquis lay at Davenport's ford. I had a little conversation with Tarleton, & he behaved very civilly. Their Number was about 400 I think. The Negroes above mentioned escaped from the light horsemen & joined the British again.

June 3. Nothing remarkable yesterday; I believe the British lay still, seeing or hearing nothing of them, a rainy dark day. This morning, between 5 & 6, Tarleton came up & past by with his Legion; they took the road to Louisa Courthouse. Few of them called & behaved well. They told us the main body moved at 1 o'clock this morning, & as we have seen nothing of them yet, hope they have taken another road.

June 5. The Main body of the Enemy took the road by Scotch town & over Ground Squirrel Bridge, & encamped along the road that goes by Mrs. Nicholas's, Mr. Dandridge's³⁸ & Boswell's old store:³⁹ extending from Stone

³⁷ A John Brown who had been an assistant factor for Boswell & Johnson in Hanover County in 1762 was living in 1807 at Fredericksburg (Glazebrook, *Virginia Migrations*, pp. 11 and 13).

³⁸ Colonel Nathaniel Dandridge lived on Allen's Creek, on the south side of the South Anna River (Glazebrook, *Virginia Migrations*, p. iv).

³⁹ John Boswell, in partnership with Colonel Richard Johnson, did business as a general merchant in "the upper end of Hanover County" in the 1760s and 1770's. Stone Horse Creek is a tributary of the South Anna (Glazebrook, *Virginia Migrations*, p. 10).

horse creek up to Boswell's. Their headquarters at Mrs. Nicholas's. There they lay quiet yesterday at midday, having myself gone within two miles of their head quarters. Nothing certain from them to day, though it is reported they still occupy the same ground. Sunday night Tarleton with his Legion lay at Louisa Court house, & set off yesterday morning 2 hours before day for Charlottesville; the report of to day is, that he arrived there yesterday at 10 o'clock & surprised & made prisoners the assembly, Council & c.⁴⁰

The last accounts from the Marquis's army mention that they were at a place called the Wilderness in the upper end of Spotsylvania; that Gen: Wayne was at Fredericksburgh & that the French Legion commanded by the Duc de Lauzun were either there, or hourly expected. Likewise that Gen: Lawson⁴¹ had joined the Marquis with a large body of militia, & that Baron de Steuben was expected to join with 7 or 800 new levies.

The news from the South is likewise very favourable, that Gen: Greene has reduced all the posts in S: Carolina & Georgia excepting Charlestown & taken 800 prisoners.

Before Lord Cornwallis left Steele's, an act of exemplary & rigorous justice was done on two soldiers who had ravished a Girl of 9 years-old; they had a very summary trial before Col: Simcoe, who allowed them an hour to prepare for death, & then hanged them up in presence of the whole army.⁴² And it must be owned that upon the whole, though many acts of violence & rapine were committed by the private soldiers, yet on complaint to the officers they were fully redressed; & (generally speaking) the higher the rank of the officer, they behaved with more moderation & civility. They took Horses, Saddles & bridles whatever provisions they wanted, but the soldiers were restrained from taking anything else. Where ever they had an opportunity, the soldiers & inferior officers likewise, enticed & flattered the Negroes, & prevailed on vast numbers to go along with them, but they did not compel any.

They have paroled the men generally who were not in arms, though a former proclamation of the Governor forbids such paroles, & declares them unprecedented & invalid.⁴³ However many people seem very fond of these paroles, as supposing they will hereafter secure them from military service,

⁴⁰ John Cook Wyllie, "New Documentary Light on Tarleton's Raid," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, LXXIV (1966), 452-461.

⁴¹ Brigadier General Robert Lawson of Prince Edward County, Virginia (Gwathmey, *Historical Register*, p. 462).

⁴² On this incident, see Simcoe, *Military Journal*, p. 212.

⁴³ Boyd, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, IV, 403-405.

& several have gone voluntarily to the Enemy & requested their protection & given their paroles. They have never yet desired me to give my parole.

Besides the vast numbers that have removed themselves, families and most valuable effects to the counties above, those that remained within any considerable distance of the Enemy's quarters or the excursions of their horse, have been under the greatest terror imaginable. Chiefly owing to the dreadful accounts we have always had of the inhuman ravages & cruelties of the British troops. Those who have been under a necessity of staying where they passed or encamped have been agreeably deceived in regard to them. But notwithstanding their favourable report, so strong is the force of prejudice & the influence of fear, that numbers still continue to lurk in the woods & thickets, & will not venture to stay at their own houses for fear of the enemy. A great many have buried their most valuable effects, both those that went off & those that staid, but principally the latter.

June 8. On the 5th the Enemy decamped from Mrs. Nicholas's & took the road leading to Goochland Court house, & the day before yesterday they were about 2 miles above Goochland Court house at one Mr. Bates's.⁴⁴ Their destination altogether uncertain. They seemed to be making preparations to cross the river.

Tarleton certainly went up to Charlottesville on Monday last, & took some members of the assembly, but how many & who they were I cannot learn. It is said he has burnt the town.

The Enemy give out that Arnold & Lesly⁴⁵ are gone up Potowmack with several thousand men to attack the Marquis in the rear. By the latest accounts the Marquis with his army was in Culpeper county, & rather retreating than advancing; no certain accounts of Gen: Wayne's joining him yet.

The day after the Enemy left Mrs. Nicholas's I went over to her house, where I saw the devastation caused by the Enemy's encamping there, for they encamped in her plantation all round the house. The fences pulled down & much of them burnt; Many cattle, hogs, sheep & poultry of all sorts killed; 150 barrels of corn eat up or wasted; & the offal of the cattle &c. with dead horses & pieces of flesh all in a putrefying state scattered over

⁴⁴ Charles, Daniel, and Thomas Bates were all taxpayers in Goochland County in 1782 (A. B. Fothergill, *Virginia Taxpayers 1782-1787* [Richmond, 1940], p. 7). Robert Pleasants noted that the British crossed at Ground Squirrel Bridge, marched to Goochland and "encamped at and about my plantation several days." He lost eleven Negroes who went away with the British (Pleasants, Letterbook, fol. 68).

⁴⁵ British General Alexander Leslie.

the plantation. Lord Cornwallis with his aids lodged in her house, & behaved with the greatest politeness. There was only Gen: O'Hara besides Cornwallis of General Officers along with the army. There was not one Tent in the British army, all of them lying under temporary sheds or arbours, made with boughs of Trees, fence rails &c., even officers of the highest rank, for (as I mentioned above) only Lord Cornwallis & his aids staid in the House. There were only 3 Ladies staid there while the British army encamped on the plantation,⁴⁶ & one of them (old Mrs. Nicholas) was sick at the time. Young Mrs. Nicholas, who has seen the Marquis's army twice, assured me that the British had 3 or 4 men to one that the Marquis had, when his army passed by that house. And all the British, regular well disciplined troops.

June 11. We have heard little of the Enemy's movements lately; save that about 2 days ago they were between Goochland Court house & Elk island. Some of them went up to the Fork of James river, where they destroyed our Stores that were there. These Stores were very valuable, consisting of Ammunition, brass Cannon, balls, Bombs &c, &c. The report of to day is that they are marching down James river towards Richmond, & others say they are making rafts to cross James river.⁴⁷

This day week (June 3d) Tarleton went to Charlottesville, but the Assembly got notice that morning & escaped to Staunton, on the other side of the mountains. At Dr. Walker's in the morning he took Col: Syme, Col: Digges & Mr Peter Lyons, all of whom he paroled & behaved with the greatest civility to them. I believe he staid but a short time in Charlottesville, but came down to the fork of James river. He did not burn the town.⁴⁸

The Assembly have not chosen another Governor, though the term of service of the former is expired, so that at present we are without a Governor. It is expected that our Assembly will appoint a Dictator at this dangerous crisis, & that Gen: Washington will be Dictator. He is expected in here (it is said) in 10 days or a fortnight.

Gen: Wayne has certainly joined the Marquis at last, & to day the whole American army were at Boswell's Ordinary, about 10 miles above Louisa

⁴⁶ Including Ann (Cary) Nicholas, widow of Robert Carter Nicholas, and her daughter-in-law Mrs. George Nicholas. A slightly garbled version of this incident is given in Louise Pecquet du Bellet, *Some Prominent Virginia Families* (Lynchburg, 1907), II, 302.

⁴⁷ The British destroyed 2,500 stand of arms, gunpowder, and other equipment on June 7, and on June 9 Simcoe moved down the James River (Simcoe, *Military Journal*, pp. 221-223).

⁴⁸ Tarleton, *History*, pp. 295-297. Colonel Dudley Digges had recently resigned as a member of the Council. Colonel John Syme, half-brother of Patrick Henry, was a Hanover County Patriot (*Official Letters of the Governors of the State of Virginia* [Richmond, 1920], III, 50n; Wyllie, "New Documentary Light on Tarleton's Raid," *VMHB*, LXXIV, 452-461).

Courthouse. It is said Wayne brought 1500 men along with him, one half of which are militia.

June 14. The latest accounts from our Army are of the night before last, when they were a few miles above the Bird Ordinary in Louisa. They say that Wayne brought only 750 men with him, but that 450 more of his troops were coming up. The Bird Ordinary is (I believe) about 36 miles from this place. Great numbers of militia have joined lately, & Morgan is expected to day with a strong body of riflemen.⁴⁹ So that from all accounts, I think the army must be near 7000 strong. The Enemy are not above 12 or 15 miles from our Army, near the Fork of James river. There are people sent out in all parts to press horses to mount cavalry for our army; there are 1000 horses wanted.⁵⁰ The great superiority of the Enemy's cavalry gives them great advantages, we are therefore determined to match them if possible. The Enemy's ships (Transports &c) lye at Bermuda or Shirley hundred in James river, with about 200 men. . . . The Baron de Steuben who guarded the Stores at the Fork of James river, was obliged to fly on the approach of the Enemy, & it is said he is coming round to join the army. He is said to have 6 or 700 of the new levies or 18 months men along with him.

June 16. About 3 days ago the Enemy left the neighbourhood of Elk island, & began to go down James river, along the river road towards Richmond. They made long marches, & the night before last their head quarters were at Dover Mill about 20 miles above Richmond. Our army yesterday morning were below the Bird ordinary on their March down the 3 notched road which likewise leads down towards Richmond; I heard yesterday of the Enemy's horse making excursions as far as Hanover County.⁵¹

A Gentleman of credit & rank from our Camp whom I saw yesterday told me, he reckoned our army did not consist of much more than 6000 men, but that large reinforcements were daily coming in & more expected. The last news of the Baron de Steuben was that he had fled as far as Prince Edward Court house, & was still flying. It is said the Baron has 1200 men with him, part new levies & part militia under Gen: Lawson who is along with him.⁵² It is a general & confirmed opinion that the Baron is not a man

⁴⁹ Governor Nelson thanked General Daniel Morgan for his offer of volunteer riflemen (Nelson to Morgan, June 20, 1781, *Official Letters*, III, 4-5).

⁵⁰ Lafayette to Jefferson, May 29, 1781, Boyd, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, VI, 38.

⁵¹ Cornwallis left the Point of Fork on June 13 and reached Richmond on June 16 (Simcoe, *Military Journal*, p. 224).

⁵² Baron Steuben reported that his troops at Prince Edward Court House were in poor condition (Steuben to Jefferson, May 28, 1781, Boyd, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, VI, 30-31).

of prowess, & that he will not fight, but that he is, what is called a good camp officer, that is for regulating & disciplining troops. There are said to be about 200 Cavalry, mounted, with our Army, & the Enemy are said to have 600 at least. By all the accounts I can gather, it appears the Enemy's army consists of about 5000 men; most say only 4000.

About 10 days ago a sum of Money in Specie arrived & was distributed among the Marquis's regular troops, 3 guineas a man, being a present from the town of Boston. Many have gone to purchase this with paper money, & the lowest rate of Exchange has been 300 for one; but a great deal has been purchased at 400 for one. The value of the paper money has fallen most amazingly lately, & the Continental money will not pass at all. I am told that at Winchester, where part of the Convention troops are stationed,⁵³ the rate of Exchange is 5 or 600 for one.

The news of the day is that a fleet of 45 sail have come into our Bay. The weather in the latter part of the Spring & as far as the summer has gone, has been remarkably changeable & various; a great deal of wet weather; a few days of extreme hot weather now & then, & presently unseasonably cold. The day before yesterday, the heat was extreme, & last night & this morning we were obliged to have fires. However all the products of the earth have thriven in a wonderful manner, excepting fruit, which was killed 2 months ago. I have never seen, since I came to this country, such luxuriant Crops of small grain, that is, of Wheat & Rye. The Corn likewise thrives exceedingly, but the people have been disturbed in tending it, by the confusion of the times.

June 19. Yesterday the Marquis's Army lay all day at Col: Nat: Dandridge's, one of the pickets being posted as low down as Mrs. Nicholas's gate. The light infantry under Gen: Muhlenburg went down towards Richmond along the road from Rocky Mill.⁵⁴ They are said to consist of 1000 men, mostly riflemen. The Marquis's head quarters at Col: Nat: Dandridge's. The Enemy's main body at Richmond, where they burnt the Tobacco two or 3 days ago. Some of them as high as Moseby's yesterday morning, & a party of their horse came to Norvell's (on the other road to Richmond) & carried off Norvell from his house. We hear that Gen: Leslie has come up James river with 1000 men from Portsmouth to join Cornwallis. A Battle is therefore expected soon, as they seem to intend to

⁵³ The British and Hessian forces surrendered at Saratoga in 1777 by Burgoyne were known as the Convention Army.

⁵⁴ Rocky Mill on the South Anna in Hanover County was owned by Colonel John Syme (*Official Letters*, III. 50n).

make a stand, & the Marquis is determined to fight them. The Baron de Steuben is returned from his precipitate flight, & is expected to join the Marquis about this time. His forces are variously reported, from 700 to 1200, & Gen: Lawson commands under him. The Baron had the charge of the Stores at the fork of James River, & had the river (then very full) between him & the enemy; besides being posted on very advantageous ground; but on the first appearance of the Enemy, he fled in the greatest haste; & the Enemy contrived to send over 12 or 15 men in a canoe, who destroyed the Stores.

General Thos. Nelson has been elected Governor of this state, since the Assembly moved to Staunton. It seems that by a resolve of Congress he is to have the rank of Major General; so that if he joins the army again, (being gone up to Staunton) he will have the command immediately under the Marquis. There are 3 new Counsellors chosen, viz MacDowel of Augusta or Rockbridge; Col: Will: Cabell of Amherst or Buckingham & one Hardy from the south side of James river. Mr. Jamieson is Lieut: Governor.⁵⁵

Gen: Morgan is expected to join the army soon, with a large reinforcement from the back Counties. The report of a fleet's coming into the Bay contradicted.

We hear that the Marquis has received intelligence of a naval engagement in the W. Indies, & that the British fleet was totally defeated & dispersed; likewise that the French had landed 7000 men in St. Lucia.

June 21. About 3 day ago the Marquis with his troops, Gen: Wayne with his & Gen: Muhlenburgh with the light infantry, composing a body of 3000 choice men went down towards Richmond where the Enemies head quarters were. But they returned to their old station at Dandridge's the night before last, without effecting any thing. They say they had well nigh surrounded Tarleton's horse of 500 men, but they contrived to get off. Col: Mercer with his troop went down in sight of Richmond & took 3 of Tarleton's men.—The day before yesterday the Enemy's horse were in Hanover Town, & yesterday 150 or 200 of them were seen coming along the road by Peter Winston's. Head Quarters of our army yesterday at Col: Dandridge's; Gen: Wayne's men at Rocky Mill.—Yesterday an Express came to the Marquis informing him, that the day before at 12 o'clock 1500 of the Enemy had crossed over James river from Richmond to Manchester & that

⁵⁵ Colonel William Cabell, Samuel Hardy, and Samuel McDowell were named to the Council, but Cabell declined to serve. David Jameson was acting Governor of Virginia during Nelson's absence with the army (*Official Letters*, III, 3n, and 25).

they still appeared to be crossing. In consequence of this information I suppose, our army moved last night. It is certain the Baron de Steuben with his men, amounting to 1500, joined the Marquis the day before yesterday.

June 23. On the 20th a skirmish happened at Westham between a small party of our Horse & a few Riflemen, & a party of the Enemy's horse. Our men were drawn into an ambuscade & lost a few men taken prisoners. But I have not certainly heard the particulars of this affair.

We have no intelligence to be depended upon concerning the enemy's motions; their present situation is variously reported.⁵⁶ The intelligence mentioned last page of 1500 of them having crossed James river was false; a small detachment did cross the river but soon returned: whether any or all have crossed since we cannot tell. Some say the Enemy are on the Williamsburgh road from Richmond, about Bottom's bridge. Gen: Mullenburgh with the light infantry went down towards Westham & Richmond the day before yesterday, but the rest of our army did not move from Rocky Mill till yesterday morning, when they marched down the road, past Norvell's & kept on the road leading down to Hanover Town & Williamsburgh; & the last I heard of them they had stopt on that road 8 or 10 miles below Norvell's.⁵⁷

Reinforcements of militia come in every day. This morning I met a troop of Volunteer Horse (about 30) from Gloucester County under one Capt: Dixon going to camp.⁵⁸ Most of our Horse are Volunteers, in small bodies, & chiefly Gentlemen; most of them exceedingly well mounted, but some of them badly armed, & all under very little discipline, & hard to govern. I suppose we may have 300 horse by this time. It is generally thought that our army at this time does consist of at least 7000 effective men; & many think there are more. We have 16 pieces of fine brass cannon along with the army.

I have seen several accounts of the Naval engagement in the W. Indies. The French fleet under Comte de Grasse of 22 Ships of the Line immediately from Europe attacked Admiral Hood with 17 sail of the Line, & after a long & sharp action the English were obliged to retreat, with great loss of men & several of their Ships much damaged. The Action happened off Martinique.

June 24. Our Army yesterday morning were at Bottom's bridge in the upper

⁵⁶ See Cornwallis to Clinton, June 30, 1781, *Clinton-Cornwallis*, II, 31-39, for British movements at this time.

⁵⁷ Lafayette to Jefferson, June 26, 1781, Boyd, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, VI, 101.

⁵⁸ Captain John Dixon of Gloucester County offered to raise such a troop of horse (Dixon to Jefferson, May 1, 1781, Boyd, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, V, 583).

end of New Kent; The several bodies who had taken different roads joined there. The Enemy were between that place & New Kent Courthouse, but a few miles from our Army.

June 28. By intelligence from men who left the camp the day before yesterday, we are informed that our Army lay at Bird's ordinary 16 miles above Williamsburgh, & that the Enemy were in that town. Likewise that there was an action the day they left the army (the 26) between a detachment of our light troops & the rear guard of the Enemy.⁵⁹ That it happened about 6 miles above Williamsburgh. They could give no account of the numbers engaged, nor what loss either party sustained, but that our men were obliged to retreat. They said that one Col: Butler & Jack Willis commanded the detachment of our army engaged in this affair.

July 1st. It appears that the above mentioned affair was of no great consequence. Col: Simcoe's corps were going down the road towards Williamsburgh, when our light infantry attacked his rear, which faced about & repulsed them. We had 5 or 6 men killed & a captain of the name of Stuart & 10 or 12 [privates] wounded. The Enemy's loss is variously related, & (as usual) exceedingly exaggerated by common report, which says we had only one man killed & the Enemy 62. But as they kept the ground it is impossible to tell.

The light infantry of the army the day before yesterday were at the Burnt Ordinary about 10 miles above Williamsburgh, & the Enemy's army in & about Williamsburgh. It is said they were embarking their baggage at Burwell's ferry; others say they were embarking their troops there, & others still said that their fleet had come round to York to take in their forces.

No certain accounts from the South lately; some say Ninety-six is taken, others that Gen: Greene lay before it, & it certainly must fall.

July 3d. Have seen many soldiers (Riflemen) from Camp who pretend to give Relations of the action of last Tuesday (the 26 of June). Some say, we lost only one man, others 2 killed, & about 12 taken prisoners; but all agree that the Enemy's loss was very great: the lowest account places it at 62 & others mount it to 75. They likewise say that Col: Simcoe was killed. That the Musquet men (as they call them) ran away at the first fire; but that the Riflemen (only 1 or 200) sustained the battle long against 1000, or 1300 or 2000 of the Enemy. But one does not know when to believe them, they

⁵⁹ This action was at Spencer's Ordinary, at the junction of the Williamsburg and Jamestown roads. Colonel Richard Butler was in command of the American troops engaged (Simcoe, *Military Journal*, pp. 228-235; Ingles, *Queen's Rangers*, pp. 210-214; Tarleton, *History*, p. 301; *Clinton-Cornwallis*, II, 31-39).