

Robert McKenzie to George Washington, September 13, 1774, Letters to Washington and Accompanying Papers. Published by the Society of the Colonial Dames of America. Edited by Stanislaus Murray Hamilton.

FROM LIEUTENANT ROBERT MACKENZIE. ¹

BOSTON CAMP Sepr. 13th. 1774

DEAR SIR

I am happy to take the Advantage of my Friend Mr. Atchison's Return to Virginia to pay my Respects where they are so much due as to yourself, especially as he expects to find you at Philadelphia engaged in the present important Affairs in America.² No Class of People wish more cordially for a happy Accommodation than those of my Profession, and among them there is not one who is under stronger Obligations to do so than myself —

Mr. Atchison can sufficiently inform you of the State of this unhappy Province, of their tyrannical Oppression over one another, of their fixed Aim at total Independance, of the Weakness and Temper of the main Springs that set the whole in Motion, and how necessary it is that abler Heads and better Hearts shd. draw a Line for their Guidance: Even when this is done 'tis much to be feared they will follow it no further than where it coincides with their present Sentiments.

Amidst all these Jarrings we have until lately lived as in a Camp of Pleasure, but the rebellious and numerous Meetings of Men in Arms, their scandalous and ungenerous Attacks upon the best Characters in the Province, obliging them to save their Lives by

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Flight, and their repeated but feeble Threats to dispossess the Troops have furnished sufficient Reasons to Genl. Gage to put the Town in a formidable State of Defence, about which we are now fully employed, and which will be shortly accomplished to their great Mortification³ —

I shall endeavour to quit this disagreeable Scene when the Regiments retire into Quarters, and hope that going or returning from James's River to pay my Respects in Person —

Col. Robt. Stuart, Dr. John Stuart, and Col. Mercer were among the last Persons I parted with in London last April—I mention them as your Acquaintances—'Tho they all had a long Detail of Grievances, neither their Health or Spirits seem to have suffered at that Time —

I have the Honour to be Dear Sir Your very respectful and most obedient Servant
ROBERT MACKENZIE Lieutt. 43d. Fort —

1 Lieutenant Mackenzie, it will be remembered, had served as a captain in the Virginia regiment in the French war, and afterwards obtained a commission in the regular army.

2 The Continental Congress was at this time in session at Philadelphia.

3 Charles Francis Adams (Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, iv. 69) states that this letter was written for the purpose of influencing Washington to oppose the policy of the Massachusetts delegates in Philadelphia, and that it was on its receipt that he “spent the afternoon with the Boston gentlemen” (Washington's Journal, September 28). “It seems to have settled all Washington's doubts, if he had any,” writes Mr. Adams, “for instead of noisy, brawling demagogues, meaning mischief only, he found the delegates plain, downright practical men, seeking safety from oppression, and contemplating violence only as a result of an absolute necessity forced on them by the government at home. The effect of this conference is made visible in his answer to MacKenzie.”