

Camp on the Heights Charlestown 17th July
1775

Dear Sir

May I flatter myself that you will Attribute my long Silence to its real Cause; the multiplicity of Business I found myself involved in on my arrival in London, both of a Private nature, and that arising from the Expedition I left Dear Cameron to Embark in? There could not have been any thing besides that could prevent me from acknowledging in the warmest terms what I owe to you from the time I had first the honor of your acquaintance, An Acquaintance increasing by initial good opinion into a friendship that could have added, if any Acquaintance could add, to my Domestick Happiness. Whenever the Delights of Cameron Present themselves to my Imagination, Prens'tfield* is sure to be the next Idea accompanied with its attendant True with, good nature, good sense and Hospitality. Very Different those Sensations from those I am forced to Entertain Of this Country and its Inhabitants, because at first Charity is willing to make some Excuses for the many, and to throw the Blame on a few, Experience however convinces us that the same spirit sh[e]ws itself from Nova Scotia to the Carolinas; Burning with the Fiercest flame in Philadelphia, New York and New England. The People, indolent in all but Mischief, base, Treacherous and Cunning, whose behavior in the field of Battle bears the same resemblance to True Courage that Cunning Does to wisdom, Delighting in Tricks and Subterfuges; The People I say presuming on their Numbers, and animated by Notions of Independence, are and have been determined for some years past to throw of[f] the British yoke, happily induced these so by our Demo –

* (possibly Prestonfield, home of Alexander Dick (Wikipedia?))

-gogues at home, they have thrown off the Mask too soon, had they Waited till Britain had been Engaged in some Bloody, expensive Long War, the more unsuccessful[!] the Better for them, then they might possibly have had some chance. As it is they are devoted to [Destroying][.] Every officer and soldier in this Army Insures victory to himself whenever ordered to attack, In the mean while they are Likely to undergo(e) a famine with (its) usual Train of Evils. This part of the Country grows nor Can Grow Corn (such is the nature of the Soil and their Indolence and Ignorance) sufficient for its Consumption; they used to be supplied with this article from Connecticut by sea; They used to get their Salt from Europe, and their molasses to make Rum from the West Indies. All these supplies are Cut off by Stopping their Ports. The Produce of this Country is Black Cattle, their winter Food Hay only, of which the Return this Harvest can be but small, All this Country being in Arms, Some brought from the Distance of two Hundred miles Inland. So that taking into account this want of Corn, Salt and Rum, with the Impracticability of Supplys of Ammunition, tho' they may Linger out this Campaign yet In the Winter they must be half Starved and totally unable To take the Field next Summer. Notwithstanding the very Bad Situation they are now in, & which must da[y]ly grow worse, We must have Numbers to take possession of the Most Important Posts.

I will mention one Instance only, at once an example of a Base, Treacherous & Pusillanimous Disposition, & then cease to trouble you With an of account of such Miscreants.

On the out Post the other morning I went at Day break to visit my advanced Sentries & found the Rebel officer had Doubled his. I went forward a Little & Desired them to Pass the word to their Commander. When he came I ordered him to withdraw his extra ordinarys, this being done I happened to take out my snuff box & by way of Civility offered him a Pinch, which he refused

saying he was afraid of the Pestilence. If I don't explain his meaning it is impossible any gentleman unacquainted with their manners should understand it. They are very much afraid of the Small Pox, which when it gets among them makes Great Ravages. That Rascal Judging of my Disposition by his own, seeing by face I had the Disorder already imagined I had the Design of In[n]oculating him by Treachery.

Miss Dicks Indisposition gave me Great uneasiness, I trust it has Long Since entirely Left her & that she Enjoys the same share of Health & Spirits she did this time Last year when we were fellow Hay Makers. Be pleased to present my sincere Compl[iments] & best wishes To Lady Dick, Miss Lance, Mr. Dick Mr. Bobby and all the children & Believe that I am

Dear Sir,
With the Greatest trust
Your most devoted Servant
J. Gunning

P.S. When you see Doctor & Miss Young I desire to be remembered to them: to Miss Bennet & Gillespie Likewise. I can assure you and Doctor Young that notwithstanding the High opinion I have of your Medical Abilitys, a Busy Campaign seems to me to be The Best Physician of the [three (?)]. I never enjoyed so much health, not the Least Complaint has [attacked] me since my departure. [Tho'ge] two Lose a Little by the Comparison; Bennet and Gillespie gain much, for I have seen No [Grazier] Like the one, nor Minister Like the other. As for Potato[e] Merchants and Dairy Gentlewomen, They are a Species unknown in Massachusetts Bay.