

John Laurens to Henry Laurens, October 26, 1776

Addressed: Henry Laurens Esqr.

Charles Town

So Carolina.

My Dear Father/

Your Letter of 14th' August was delivered to me just as I had despair'd of hearing any other Intelligence of you than such general Accounts as I might by chance gather from my Carolina Acquaintance? they were all happy in comparing the advices of their Friends, I had made fruitless Inquiries at Mr Manning's and the Coffee House; your Letters came the day after other people had read theirs, to give me a Happiness that was heightened by the preceding Contrast? what occasioned this extraordinary Delay I have not yet discover'd neither do I know what is become of Monsr Rilliet and the papers said to be in his possession.

I shall leave them for the present to make you hearty Congratulations on the Success of our gallant Countrymen? to tell you with rapture that your desire of restoring the Rights of Men, to those wretched Mortals who have so long been unjustly deprived of them, coincides exactly with my Feelings upon that Subject? and above all to thank you for the permission which you have given me to return to my Native Country? American papers of a late date had been distributed before I received your Letter : and the Battle of Sullivant's Island as described in Well's Gazette copied immediately by the English papers? but impartial People had been convinced even from Sr P. Parker's own account, notwithstanding irksome truths had been suppress'd, and great pains had been taken by the choice of expressions in relating the Matter to palliate his Defeat, that the honour of a very clear Victory was due to our Countrymen? I suppose you know that Ld Wm. Campbell was so condescending as to take the Command of the Bristol's lower deck? it does not appear to me that the Ships went near enough to your Fort, to attack it with advantage? yet I am told that the Depth of Water was sufficient to admit them close to the shore? if there is no sand bank or shoal to serve as a natural defence, it was well imagined to place the Fort at some distance from the Water's edge? for when a ship can lay pretty near to the battery she places great dependence upon the small Arms &c in her Tops, the Men stationed there pick off those who are employed in working the Enemy's Guns? & it is on this account I think that the parapets of Forts near the Water are made higher than

those of Fortifications in general are? Our spirits raised by Coll<sup>l</sup> Moultrie's Victory have been proportionably sunk by the accounts of our misfortunes at long Island? but we allow ourselves to hope that the next Intelligence will be more favourable and that Revenge will be more active in the minds of our Countrymen than Terror?

The equitable Conduct which you have resolved upon with respect to your Negroes, will undoubtedly meet with great Opposition from interested Men? I have often conversed upon the subject and I have scarcely ever met with a Native of the Southern provinces or the W. Indies, who did not obstinately recur to the most absurd Arguments in support of Slavery? but it was easy to perceive that they consider'd only their own advantage arising from the Fact, and embarrassed themselves very little about the Right? indeed when driven from everything else? they generally exclaim'd ?Without Slaves how is it possible for us to be rich There may be some Inconvenience and even Danger in advancing Men suddenly from a state of Slavery, while possessed of the manners and Principles incident to that State, there may be danger I say in advancing such Men too suddenly to the Rights of Freemen? the Example of Rome suffering from Swarms of bad Citizens who were freedmen is a warning to us to proceed with Caution ; and the necessity for it is an Argument of the complete Mischief occasioned by our continued Usurpation-? we have sunk the African and their descendants below the standard of Humanity, and almost render'd them incapable of that Blessing which equal Heaven bestow'd upon us all? by what shades and Degrees they are to be brought to the happy state which you propose for them, is not to be determined in a moment? whatever I can collect from Books, and the Conversation of sensible Men shall be carefully attended to and consider'd? in the meantime I am glad to find that you had the same Confidence in me, that I had in you? the Plan of agitation has been for some time a favorite one of mine? and I should have written my Thoughts as fully upon the Subject as I have spoken them here to Mr Manning and others of our Friends who have opposed me in it, but that the present State of our Affairs seem'd to require the matter to be a little postponed.

Will you forgive me Sir for adding a Daughter in Law to your Family without first asking your Consent? I must reserve particulars 'till I have the pleasure of seeing you? my Wife Mr Manning's youngest Daughter promises soon to give you a Grand Child?

If I could manage to spend the Winter as a Volunteer in Prussia, at little expence, I shd. come out to you pretty well trained early in the Spring? if the service to be learn'd in

the time will not make it worth the while which matter I am just now consulting?I shall take my Passage immediately for Carolina?

The Account of your Exercise on Horseback makes me happy as it gives me an Assurance of your good Health long may God preserve it?Your Children here and my Uncle and Aunt are well?my Uncle has been somewhat indisposed owing I believe to the Approach of the Winter? Harry goes on very well and will be left in very good hands?

This Letter my Father in Law is to send by way of the W. Indies?I shall have the pleasure of writing to you again by the way of Bourdeaux?when I shall mention M. Bre mar who I am sorry to inform you has not conducted herself as well as she ought to have done.

Your most affectionate and dutiful

J Laurens.

26th Octob. 1776.

Endorsed: John Laurens

26 October 1776

22 March 1777.