

# CORRESPONDENCE

BETWEEN

HIS EXCELLENCY GENERAL

SIR HENRY CLINTON, K. B.

AND

LIEUTENANT GENERAL

EARL CORNWALLIS.

[New York 1781]

---

## CORRESPONDENCE

Between His EXCELLENCY GENERAL SIR  
HENRY CLINTON, K. B. and LIEUTE-  
NANT GENERAL EARL CORNWALLIS.

*Head-Quarters, New-York, July 8, 1781.*

MY LORD,

I AM this moment honored with your Lordship's letter, by Ensign *Amiel*, of the 30th ultimo, and am happy to be informed you have had an opportunity of destroying such a quantity of arms and public stores, the loss of which must be very heavily felt by the enemy.

By your Lordship's answer to my letters of the 11th and 15th ultimo, (which are the only ones you acknowledge the receipt of, and in which I made a requisition for some of the corps serving in the Chesapeake, *if you could spare them.*) I am to understand that your Lordship does not think that, with the remainder (which would have amounted to at least four thousand, supposing even then you sent me three thousand) you could maintain the posts I had proposed to be occupied at York-Town, &c. so necessary, in every respect, to cover our fleet and give us entire command over the entrance of that Bay. I therefore think proper to mention to your Lordship

ship, that whatever my ideas may have been of the force sufficient to maintain that station, and the corresponding one on the Gloucester side, your Lordship was left the sole judge of that sufficiency to the whole amount of the corps under your immediate orders in Virginia;---nor did I mean to draw a single man from you, until you had provided for a respectable defensive, and retained a small corps for desultory water expeditions, for my requisition was made after the receipt of your Lordship's letter of the 26th May; from which I apprehended that you had no immediate operation of your own to propose, and did not think it expedient to adopt the one I had recommended to General Phillips. But I confess, I could not conceive you would require above four thousand, in a station wherein General Arnold had represented to me (upon report of Colonel Simcoe) that two thousand men would be amply sufficient; and being strongly impressed with the necessity of our holding a naval station for large ships as well as small, and judging that York-Town was of importance for securing such a one, I cannot but be concerned that your Lordship should so suddenly lose sight of it, pass James River, and retire with your army to the sickly post of Portsmouth, where your horses will, I fear, be starved, and a hundred other inconveniences will attend you; and this, my Lord, as you are pleased to say, because you were of opinion that it exceeded your power, consistent with my plans, to make safe defensive posts there and at Gloucester.--My plans, my Lord, were to draw from Chesapeak, as well for the sake of their health, as for a necessary defensive in this important post, such troops as your Lordship could  
could

could spare from a respectable defensive of York, Gloucester, or such other station as was proper to cover line of battle ships, and from all the other services I had recommended; but I could not possibly mean that your Lordship should for this give up the hold of a station so important for the purposes I designed, and which I think La Fayette will immediately seize and fortify the moment he hears you have repassed James River; ---for though I am to suppose the enemy will be as little able to defend it with five thousand men as your Lordship judges yourself to be, and of course may, be for the same reasons, dispossessed. I should be sorry to begin with a siege the operations I am determined to carry on in Chesapeak whenever the season will admit of them; I will therefore consult Rear Admiral Graves on this subject, and let your Lordship have our joint opinions in consequence.

WITH regard to Portsmouth, your Lordship will have seen by my former letters and the papers in your possession, that when I sent General Leslie to the Chesapeak I only wished for a station to cover our cruising frigates and other small ships: That General Officer thought proper to make choice of Portsmouth, and had, I doubt not, good reasons for so doing. But it has ever been my opinion, that if a better could be found, especially for covering line of battle ships, it ought to have the preference; and I think if Old Point Comfort will secure Hampton-Road, that is the station we ought to choose---for, if Elizabeth River is at all kept, a small post for about three hundred men at Mill Point, would, in my opinion, answer. But as to quitting the Chesapeak entirely,

entirely, I cannot entertain a thought of such a measure; but shall most probably, on the contrary, send there as soon as the season returns for acting in that climate, all the troops which can possibly be spared from the different posts under my command. I therefore flatter myself, that even although your Lordship may have quitted York, and detached troops to me, that you will have a sufficiency to re-occupy it, or that you will at least hold Old Point Comfort, if it is possible to do it without York.

By the letters brought to me from the Minister, by the last packet, I understand that three battalions, originally destined for this army, are to accompany Sir George Rodney, in case De Grasse comes on this coast; from whence I am to conclude he will be certainly followed by that Admiral. I am likewise told that nearly two thousand two hundred German recruits and auxiliary troops may be hourly expected to arrive here.

*Head-Quarters, New-York, July 10, 1781.*

MY LORD,

I AM just returned from having a conference with Rear Admiral Graves, in consequence of your Lordship's letter of the 30th ult. and we are both clearly of opinion that it is absolutely necessary we should hold a station in Chesapeak for ships of the line as well as frigates; and the Admiral seems to think, that should the enemy possess themselves of Old Point Comfort, Elizabeth River could no longer  
be

be of any use to us, as a station for the frigates : He therefore judges that Hampton Road is the fittest station for all ships, in which your Lordship will see by the papers in your possession, I likewise agree with him. It was moreover my opinion that the possession of York-Town, even though we did not possess Gloucester, might give security to the works we might have at Old Point Comfort, which I understand secures Hampton Road.

I HAD flattered myself, that, after giving me as nearly three thousand men as you could spare, your Lordship might have had a sufficiency, not only to maintain those posts, but to spare for desultory expeditions, for I had no other plans in view than to draw for the defence of this post, and operations in its neighbourhood, such troops as could be spared from your army, after leaving an ample defensive to such stations as your Lordship might judge proper to occupy, and a small moving corps for desultory water expeditions during the summer months, in which no other might be proper in that unhealthy climate. But as your Lordship seems to think that you can in no degree comply with my requisition for troops, and at the same time establish a post capable of giving protection to ships of war, and it is probable, from what you write me, that you may have repassed James River and retired to Portsmouth : I beg leave to request that you will, without loss of time, examine Old Point Comfort, and fortify it, detaining such troops as you may think necessary for that purpose, and garrisoning it afterwards. But if it should be your Lordship's opinion, that Old Point Comfort cannot be held without hav-

ing

ing possession of York, for in this case Gloucester may perhaps be not so material, and that the whole cannot be done with less than seven thousand men, you are at full liberty to detain all the troops now in Chesapeake, which, I believe, amounts to somewhat more than that number; which very liberal concession, will, I am persuaded, convince your Lordship of the high estimation in which I hold a naval station in Chesapeake, though my whole force in this very extensive and important post is not quite eleven thousand effectives; and how far I may be justifiable in leaving it to so reduced a garrison, time will shew.

I AM as much mortified as your Lordship can possibly be at the necessity there is, at present, for leaving you upon the defensive in Chesapeake; and your Lordship will do me the justice to observe, that I have, for some months past, been myself content with a starved defensive, from the desire I had to give your Lordship as large an army for offensive operations as I could. Therefore, until the season for re-commencing operation in the Chesapeake shall return, your Lordship, or whoever remains in the command there, must, I fear, be content with a strict defensive. And I must desire, that you will be pleased to consider this as a positive requisition to you, not to detain a greater proportion of the troops now with you than what may be absolutely wanted for defensive operations, as before mentioned.

WHEN, therefore, your Lordship has finally determined upon the force you think sufficient for such works as you shall erect at Point Comfort, and the number

number you judge requisite to cover them at York-Town, and for the other services of the Chesapeak during the unhealthy season, you will be pleased to send me the remainder. Your Lordship will observe by this, that I do not see any great necessity for holding Portsmouth while you have Old Point Comfort; for should a station on Elizabeth River be judged necessary, I think Mill Point will answer every necessary purpose of covering frigates, &c.

I have the honor to be,

Your Lordship's

Most obedient and

Most humble Servant,

H. CLINTON.

(Signed)

*Lieutenant General  
Earl Cornwallis.*

*Extract of a Letter from Lieutenant General Earl Cornwallis to his Excellency General Sir Henry Clinton, K.B. &c. &c. &c. dated Cobham, July 8th, 1781.*

I MUST again take the liberty of calling your Excellency's serious attention to the question of the utility of a defensive post in this country, which cannot have the smallest influence on the war in Carolina, and which only gives us some acres of an unhealthy swamp, and is for ever liable to become a prey to a foreign enemy, with a temporary superiority at sea. Desultory expeditions in the Chesapeak, may be undertaken from New-York, with as much

B

ease



ease, and more safety, whenever there is reason to suppose that our naval force is likely to be superior for two or three months.

*Head-Quarters, New-York, July 15, 1781.*

MY LORD,

UNTIL I had the honor to receive your Lordship's letter of the 8th instant, I had flattered myself that upon reconsidering the general purport of our correspondence, and General Phillips's papers in your possession, you would at least have waited for a line from me in answer to your letter of the 30th ultimo, before you finally determined upon so serious and mortifying a move, as the repassing James River, and retiring with your army to Portsmouth. And I was the more induced to hope that this would have been the case, as we both seemed to agree in our opinions, of the propriety of taking a healthy station on the neck between York and James Rivers, for the purpose of covering a proper harbour for our line of battle ships, and I am persuaded your Lordship will be sensible, that in all my letters I clearly leave you at full liberty to detain any part or even the whole of the troops I solicited you to send me, should your Lordship have determined on any solid operation of your own in Virginia, or else where, or should you have adopted the one I had recommended in the upper Chesapeake, or even should you have judged their continuance with you necessary until the stations you might think proper to take were rendered *respectably* defensive. Your letter of the 30th ultimo, in which your

Lordship

Lordship was pleased to intimate this intention, did not leave the Chesapeak before the 5th instant, and as soon as I consulted the Admiral at the Hook, upon its contents, I lost no time in dispatching my answer to your Lordship both by a ship of war, and one of my runners. But as I now find your Lordship has decided, I shall say no more upon the subject; and I sincerely congratulate you upon the success of your well concerted plan against the Marquis de la Fayette; hoping that amongst other good effects which may be expected from it, it will prevent his giving you disturbance in the execution of what I recommended to your Lordship in my letter of the 11th instant, a duplicate of which accompanies this. I likewise request your Lordship will be pleased to communicate to Lieut. Colonels Dundas, Simcoe, and Tarleton; whom you have particularised, the first for his conduct and gallantry in the action of James Town, and the two others for their active services on your march through Virginia, and to all the other officers and soldiers under your command, the high sense I have of their spirit and good behaviour, for which I desire their acceptance of my thanks.

As your Lordship is again pleased to recall my serious attention to the question of the utility of a defensive post in Virginia, which you say cannot have the smallest influence on the war in Carolina, and which only gives us some acres of an unhealthy swamp, I must in answer beg leave again to repeat to your Lordship, that it never was my intention to continue a post on Elizabeth River any longer than until the commencement of solid operation in the Chesapeak, nor  
to

to have there more troops than what might be capable of defending a small work on that river; and that all the General Officers who have commanded in the Chesapeak, have had my consent to change that station for one more healthy if they judged it proper to do so. To which I will moreover add, that it ever has been, is, and ever will be my firm and unalterable opinion, that it is of the first consequence to His Majesty's affairs on this continent, that we take possession of the Chesapeak, and that we do not afterwards relinquish it. I beg leave also, my Lord, to dissent from the opinion you have given me of a defensive post in Chesapeak, and that desultory expeditions there may be undertaken from New-York with as much ease and more safety; for I cannot but suppose that a defensive station in Chesapeak, with a corps of at least 4000 regular troops, for its protection and desultory water movements during the summer months, wherein land operation may be impracticable, would have the most beneficial effects on more distant districts for the reasons I have already had the honor to give your Lordship.--Nor do I recollect, that in any of my letters to your Lordship, I have suggested an idea, that there was a probability of the enemy's having a naval superiority in these seas for any length of time, much less for so long a one as two or three months.

BUT with respect to the unhealthiness of the station at Portsmouth, my letters to General Phillips on that subject, wherein I say, "God forbid I should wish to bury the elite of my army in Nanfemond and Princess Anne," will satisfy your Lordship that we are both of one opinion.

WITH

WITH regard to your Lordship's returning to Charles-Town, for which you say you wait my approbation, though I allow your Lordship to be the best judge where your presence may be most required, yet, as I cannot conceive that offensive operation will be carried on in Carolina for some months, I must beg leave to recommend it to you to remain in Chesapeake, at least until the stations I have proposed are occupied and established, and your Lordship favours me with your opinion of the number of men you can afterwards spare from their defence until the first week in October, about which time, it is my intention, as I have before told your Lordship, to re-commence operation in the Chesapeake; but whether in Virginia, according to your Lordship's plan, or in the Upper Chesapeake, according to my own, I shall then determine.—If in the first, I shall request the favour of your Lordship to conduct it, as you must be a better judge than I can, from the local knowledge you have acquired in your march through great part of the country, and your being from thence capable of judging how far it is connected with the southern provinces: If in the last, I shall probably assume the direction of it myself; and I shall, in that case, be glad to have your Lordship's assistance. But if you should prefer returning to Carolina, I shall, after that, no longer restrain your Lordship from following your inclinations.

Now, my Lord, I have only to repeat what I have already said in all my letters, that you are at full liberty to employ all the troops under your immediate command in Chesapeake, if you are of opinion they  
may

may be wanted for the defence of the stations you shall think proper to occupy, securing to us, at least, a healthy one, from whence we may start at the proper time for beginning operation, and for the carrying on, in the interim, such desultory water expeditions as you may think of any utility. I should, indeed, have hoped, that even in the season for active operation, seven thousand men would have been quite sufficient, considering the force which the enemy can bring against you, in this, however, your Lordship seems to think different.

SHOULD nothing therefore happen to induce you to alter your opinion, or should any object cast up of importance enough to be undertaken at this inclement season, you are at liberty to keep the whole; but before you finally decide, I request your Lordship will recollect the very bare defensive I am reduced to in this post, whilst I have opposed to me Washington's army, which is already eight or ten thousand men, the French four thousand, besides the large reinforcement expected to them; and I scarce need mention to your Lordship, who is so well acquainted with their disposition, the effect which such an appearance will have on the numerous and warlike militia of the five neighbouring provinces.

I have the honour to be,

Your Lordship's

Most obedient and

Most humble Servant,

H. CLINTON.

(Signed)

Lieutenant General  
Earl Cornwallis.

Lieutenant

*Lieutenant General Earl Cornwallis to his Excellency  
General Sir Henry Clinton, K. B. &c. &c. &c.*

*Portsmouth, Virginia, July 27th, 1781.*

S I R,

I RECEIVED your cyphered letter of the 11th instant on the 20th, in consequence of which the expedition was detained, and on the 21st I was honored with your dispatches of the 8th and 11th instant, by Captain Stapleton, the contents of which, I will confess, were to me as unexpected as, I trust, they are undeserved.

As a subordinate officer I think it my duty to obey positive orders, or in exercising discretionary powers, to act as much as possible conformable to the apparent wishes of my superior officer, combined with the evident good of the service: And, in my late conduct, I hope I have not deviated from those principles. For, permit me to remark, that I cannot discover in the instructions to General Phillips, and the substance of private conversations with him (extracts of which I take the liberty to inclose) to which I am referred, nor in our former correspondence, any trace of the extreme earnestness that now appears to secure a harbour for ships of the line, and your assent to my engaging in operations in the upper Chesapeake, if I could have brought myself to think them expedient, would, if I had doubted before, have convinced me that securing a harbour for line of battle ships was not with you a primary and immediate object. In my letter of the 26th of May, I informed your Excellen-

C,

cy, that after destroying the stores at Richmond and the adjoining country, I should move back to Williamsburgh, keeping the army in readiness to comply with your further instructions. I arrived at that place on the 25th, and on the 26th of June I received from Ensign Amiel your dispatches of the 11th and 15th of the same month, being the first letters that I received from you since my arrival in Virginia. In the first you tell me New-York is threatened to be attacked by a very numerous enemy; and therefore, wishing to concentrate your force, you recommend to me to send a body of troops to you as I can spare them in the order mentioned in a list, unless I have engaged in operations in the upper Chesapeak; and in the dispatch of the 15th, taking for granted that I have not engaged in those operations, you require that the embarkation of those troops may begin with the greatest dispatch. After a full compliance with this requisition, the force left under my command would have been about two thousand four hundred rank and file, fit for duty, as will appear by the returns, which in a post adapted to that number, I hoped would be sufficient for a defensive and desultory water expeditions. You mention Williamsburgh and York in your letter of the 11th, as defensive stations, but only as being supposed healthy, without deciding on their safety. Williamsburgh having no harbour, and requiring an army to occupy the position, would not have suited us. I saw that it would require a great deal of time and labour to fortify York and Gloucester, both of which are necessary to secure a harbour for vessels of any burthen, and to effect it assistance would have been wanted from some of the troops then under

under embarkation orders, which, when New-York was in danger, I did not think myself at liberty to detain for any other purpose than operations in the upper Chesapeak; and supposing both places fortified, I thought they would have been dangerous defensive posts, either of them being easily accessible to the whole force of this province, and from their situation they would not have commanded an acre of country. I therefore under these circumstances, with the most earnest desire to comply with what I thought were your present wishes, and to facilitate your intended future operations in Pennsylvania, did not hesitate in deciding to pass James River, and to retire to Portsmouth, that I might be able to send you the troops required. And I was confirmed in the propriety of the measure when, upon passing James River, I received your dispatch informing me, that for essential reasons you had resolved to make an attempt on Philadelphia, and directing me to embark with the greatest expedition the same body of troops, with stores, &c. for that purpose. Having likewise executed this order with the utmost exertion and alacrity, I must acknowledge I was not prepared to receive, in the next dispatch from your Excellency, a severe censure for my conduct.

IMMEDIATELY on the receipt of your cyphered letter I gave orders to the Engineer to examine and survey Point Comfort, and the channels adjoining to it; I have likewise visited it with the Captains of the King's ships now lying in Hampton Road. I have the honor to enclose to you copies of the report of the Engineer, and of the opinions of the Captains of the



navy on that subject, with which my own entirely concurs; and I likewise transmit a survey of the peninsula made by Lieutenants Sutherland and Stratton. From all which your Excellency will see that a work on Point Comfort would neither command the entrance, nor secure his Majesty's ships at anchor in Hampton Road. This being the case, I shall, in obedience to the spirit of your Excellency's orders, take measures with as much dispatch as possible, to seize and fortify York and Gloucester, being the only harbour in which we can hope to be able to give effectual protection to line of battle ships. I shall likewise use all the expedition in my power to evacuate Portsmouth and the posts belonging to it, but until that is accomplished it will be impossible for me to spare troops. For York and Gloucester, from their situation, command no country; and a superiority in the field will not only be necessary to enable us to draw forage and other supplies from the country, but likewise to carry on our works without interruption.

Your Excellency having been pleased to disapprove of my going to South-Carolina, I have sent General Leslie, who sailed on the 25th instant, in the Carysfort, to take the command there.

I have the honour to be,  
 With great respect, Sir,  
 Your most obedient and  
 Most humble Servant,

(Signed) **CORNWALLIS.**  
*His Excellency General*  
*Sir Henry Clinton, K. B. &c. &c. &c.*

**EXTRACT**

*EXTRACT of the INSTRUCTIONS of his EXCELLENCY SIR HENRY CLINTON, to MAJOR GENERAL PHILLIPS, dated at Head-Quarters, New-York, March 10, 1781.*

**I**F the Admiral, disapproving of Portsmouth, and requiring a fortified station for large ships in the Chesapeak, should propose York Town, or Old Point Comfort, if possession of either can be acquired and maintained without great risk or loss, you are at liberty to take possession thereof; but if the objections are such as you shall think forcible, you must, after stating those objections, decline it till solid operation take place in Chesapeak.

*EXTRACT of several CONVERSATIONS that HIS EXCELLENCY SIR HENRY CLINTON had with MAJOR GENERAL PHILLIPS, on the Subject of OPERATIONS in the Chesapeak, before his Embarkation on his Expedition thither.*

**W**ITH regard to a station for the protection of the King's ships; I know of no place so proper as York Town, if it could be taken possession of, fortified, and garrisoned with one thousand men--- as by having one thousand more at a post somewhere in Elizabeth River, York and James Rivers would be ours, and our cruizers. might command the waters of the Chesapeak; troops might likewise be spared from these posts to carry on expeditions during the summer months, when probably nothing can be risked in that climate but water movements. But if the heights of York, and those on Gloucester side cannot

cannot be so well and so soon fortified as to render that post *bors d'Insult* before the enemy can move a force, &c. against it, it may not be adviseable to attempt it. In that case something may possibly be done at Old Point Comfort to cover large ships lying in Hampton Road, which is reckoned a good one, and not so liable to injury from gales at N. E. as that of York (particularly in winter.) If neither can be secured, we must content ourselves with keeping the Chesapeak with frigates and other armed vessels, which will always find security against a superior naval force, in Elizabeth River.

As our operations in proper season may recommence in the upper James, perhaps a station might be found at the entrance of the narrows of that river that may be of use in future day, and held with a small force. James-Town seems a proper spot for such a station, as does the place where the narrows and winding begin.

*Copy of a Letter from Lieutenant Sutherland, of the Engineers, to Lieutenant General Earl Cornwallis.*

*Billy, Ordnance Transport, Hampton-Road, July 25th, 1781.*

MY LORD,

**A** GREEABLE to your orders I have examined the ground on Old Point Comfort with as much accuracy as I possibly could; and, for your Lordship's better information, I have made a survey of the ground, upon which is laid down the width and foundings of the channel.

I BEG leave to offer what appears to me respecting the situation of a work on that spot.

THE ground where the ruins of Fort George lay is the fittest for a work, but at the same time must be attended with many inconveniencies.

THE level of the ground there is about two feet higher than the high water mark, which from its very short distance to the deep water must soon be destroyed by a naval attack.

THE great width and depth of the channel give ships the advantage of passing the fort with very little risk. I apprehend fifteen hundred yards is too great a distance for batteries to stop ships, which is the distance here; ships that wish to pass the fire of the fort have no occasion to approach nearer.

NOR do I imagine a fort built there could afford any great protection to an inferior and weak fleet, anchored near the fort, against a superior fleet of the enemy, which must have it in their power to make their own disposition, and place our fleet between them and the fort; the channel affording no bay for the ships under cover of a fort.

THE time and expence to build a fort there, must be very considerable from the low situation of the ground, which must necessarily cause the soil to be moved from a great distance to form the ramparts and parapets; and every other material must be carried there, - as the timber on the peninsula is unfit for any useful purpose.

THESE

THESE are the remarks which have occurred to me on examining the ground and situation of a work on Old Point Comfort, for the protection of the harbour and fleet, which I humbly submit to your Lordship. I have the honor to be,

*&c. &c.*

*(Signed)*

ALEX. SUTHERLAND,  
Lieut. of Engineers.

*Copy of a Letter from the Captains of his Majesty's Ships, to Lieutenant General Earl Cornwallis.*

*Richmond, Hampton Road, 26th July 1781.*

MY LORD,

IN consequence of a requisition that your Lordship received from the Commanders in Chief of His Majesty's troops and ships, relative to a post being established at Old Point Comfort, for the protection and security of the King's ships that may occasionally be sent to the Chesapeak, We whose names are hereunto subscribed, have taken as accurate a survey of that place as possible, and are unanimously of opinion, from the width of the channel, and depth of water close to it, that any superior enemy's force coming in, may pass any work that can be established there, with little damage, or destroy it with the ships that may be there under its protection.

We have the honor to be, *&c. &c.*

*(Signed)*

Charles Hudson,  
Thos. Symonds,  
Chas. Everitt,  
Ralph Dundas.

*Lieutenant General Earl Cornwallis, &c. &c.*

*Lieutenant*

*Lieutenant General Earl Cornwallis, to his Excellency  
General Sir Henry Clinton, K. B. &c. &c. &c.*

*York, Virginia, August 12th, 1781.*

S I R,

I RECEIVED the inclosed letter last night from Governor Bruere; one to the same effect arrived two days ago, from him, directed to the commanding officer of the navy, and was immediately forwarded to the Admiral by the officer stationed near the Capes.

I EMBARKED the 80th regiment in boats, and went myself on board of the Richmond very early in the morning of the 29th, but we were so unfortunate in winds as to be four days on our passage: The 80th landed on the night of the 1st, at Gloucester, and the troops who were in transports, on the morning of the 2d, at this place. I have since brought the 71st and Legion hither, and sent the regiment du Prince Hereditaire to Gloucester.

THE works on the Gloucester side are in some forwardness, and I hope in a situation to resist a sudden attack. Brigadier General O'Hara is hastening, as much as possible, the evacuation of Portsmouth. As soon as he arrives here, I will send to New-York every man that I can spare, consistent with the safety and subsistence of the force in this country.

I have the honor to be,

With great respect, Sir,

Your most obedient, and

Most humble Servant,

(Signed)

CORNWALLIS,

*His Excellency General*

*Sir Henry Clinton, K. B. &c. &c. &c.*

*Lieu-*

*Lieutenant General Earl Cornwallis, to his Excellency  
General Sir Henry Clinton, K. B. &c. &c. &c.*

*York-Town, in Virginia, August 16, 1781.*

SIR,

**T**HIS morning I received your cyphered letter of the 11th instant, by the runner.

I DID not imagine that my letter of the 26th of July, would have given your Excellency reason to be so sanguine as to hope that by this time, any detachment could have been made from hence. The evacuation of Portsmouth has employed one engineer and a number of labourers and artificers, and with every exertion by land and water, I do not expect that business to be completed before the 21st or 22d inst. Since our arrival we have bestowed our whole labour on the Gloucester side, but I do not think the works there, (after great fatigue to the troops) are at present, or will be for some time to come, safe against a Coup de Main with less than one thousand men. After our experience of the labour and difficulty of constructing works at this season of the year, and the plan for fortifying this side not being entirely settled, I cannot at present say whether I can spare any troops, or, if any, how soon; but when the garrison of Portsmouth arrives, and the engineer's plan is completed, I shall apply to captain Hudson for a frigate to carry my report of the state of things here, and to bring your Excellency's commands upon it. I have received your Excellency's dispatches of the 15th and 26th ultimo, which I shall answer by the first safe opportunity.

I

I beg that your Excellency will be pleased to order it to be notified to the port of New-York, that Portsmouth is evacuated, to prevent vessels from going into that harbour:

I have the honor to be,

With great respect,

Sir,

Your most obedient, and

Most humble servant;

CORNWALLIS.

(Signed)

*His Excellency General*

*Sir Henry Clinton, K. B. &c. &c. &c.*

*New-York, August 2, 1781.*

MY LORD,

I WAS last night honored with your Lordship's letters of the 24th and 27th ultimo, by Captain Stapleton, and it gives me no small concern to observe, by the tenor of them, that you are displeased with the opinions I took the liberty of giving in my letter of the 29th of May; respecting the probable consequences of your retreat from Cross-Creek to Wilmington, and march from thence to Petersburg--- and with what I said to your Lordship in my letters of the 8th and 11th of last month, on your design of abandoning the Williamsburgh Neck, and retiring with your army to Portsmouth. Therefore, as it was not my intention to give offence, and is extremely my wish to be properly understood by your Lordship,