



A modern re-enactment, on the original battle site, of Eutaw Springs; at which engagement Pierce was wounded.

“THE FINEST SOIL IN THE WORLD FOR THE CULTURE OF LAURELS...”

*One of Gen. Greene’s aides, Capt. William Pierce,
Relays News from the Southern Department.*

Originally a captain in the 1st Continental artillery (beginning on 30 Nov. 1776), William Leigh Pierce (1740-1789), from Virginia, was in mid-November 1780, along with Captain Nathaniel Pendleton, enlisted by Maj. Gen. Nathanael Greene in Richmond; when in Nov. 1780 the latter was making his way south to assume command of the southern army. On 30 September 1783, he was brevetted (i.e., raised in rank but without additional pay) to Major, and after the war entered politics; serving as a delegate from Georgia for the Federal Convention in 1787. While he did not remain in Philadelphia long enough to sign the Constitution (indeed, he died in only 1789), Pierce did participate and have a tangible impact on some of the debate that went on beforehand; including with respect to guidelines for how members of Congress and Senators are to be elected. Yet of particular consequence, he wrote brief sketches of the Convention delegates which are viewed as being of singular value to historians of the Constitution; though it must in fairness to the delegates be said that these sketches, while useful, are too terse to be taken as entirely just or accurate portraits.¹

Collected for this entry in our series are a series of letters Pierce wrote in 1781-1782, and which were sent to Virginia militia cavalry officer² and subsequently eminent and much respected jurist and Federal judge, Saint George Tucker (1752-1827). These first appeared publically in the Magazine of American History, Dec. 1881, vol. VII, no. 6, pp. 431-445; as presented by editor and historian Charles Washington Coleman, Jr.; and are reproduced here -- possible errors (mostly) included -- as printed there. I did, however, insert additional footnotes of my own, and which appear at the bottoms of the page.

Apart from providing some scarce historical gossip, Pierce’s correspondence is of especial fascination; yet less so for their military reporting, than for the references and vignettes they provide of the attitudes, outlook, and social life within Greene’s most intimate military circle. Taken in all, the picture Pierce draws reveals the general’s “family” and higher ranking Continental commanders to have, at least in some worthy and laudable measure, been a sometimes merry and occasionally joking ensemble of gentlemen -- including at one point staging among themselves a production of Shakespeare’s “Much Ado

¹ Pierce evidently dabbled (at least slightly) in verse, including *The Year: a poem, in three cantos*, David Longworth (pub.), N.Y. 1813; and “An epitaph -- intended for the monument of major general Greene” (“by William Pierce, esq., of Savannah”) found in *The American Museum*, for 1789 vol. 6, p. 86; that reads:

“Like other things, this marble must decay.
The cipher’d characters shall fade away,
And naught but ruin mark this sacred spot,
Where Greene’s interr’d -- perhaps the place forgot;
But time, unmeasured, shall preserve his name,
Through distant ages shall roll on his fame,
And in the heart of every good man, raise
A lasting monument of matchless praise.”

² *Tucker was wounded in Lafayette’s Virginia campaign.*

About Nothing": an unusually genial view of general staff officers in the Revolutionary War rather seldom -- less so certainly than one might wish -- brought to light.

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I.

Head Quarters on the High Hills of  
Santee, July 20th, 1781

My dear Sir

So very uncertain is the passage of letters through North Carolina that I am fearful my last has met with the fate of the first entrusted to the care of the *planet-struck hero*. It was a plain narrative of facts without the tinsel of language or the puff of observation, and calculated entirely for your perusal and the information of a few friends. Both your letters I have been honored with, and feel an obligation for your attention. The last particularly gave me sensible pleasure, not only because it furnished me with a succinct account of matters in Virginia, but because it demonstrates a remembrance of one who feels himself singularly happy in your friendship. If a great sincerity of affection in return can make compensation for your extreme goodness we shall have our accounts settled without the trouble of a law-suit. I thank you for your satire on Lovelace,<sup>3</sup> and when the amorous move shall seize me I will pluck a laurel from the branch of Daphne to ornament the temples of your muse for the performance. But pray tell me, do you bathe in Hippocrene or Helicon?

I must now invite you to our climate, and conduct you through all the hardships, dangers and mutable fortunes of the campaign, from your leaving us at Ramsay's<sup>4</sup> Mill to the settlement of our army on the High Hills of Santee. To begin with our peregrination, -- give a free exercise to your imagination, and keep close to our heels. A few days after the discharge of the Virginia militia, the whole army was put in motion for Camden, with views either to draw Lord Cornwallis after us, or dispossess the British of all their interior posts in South Carolina. The principle which governed this manoeuvre was the same that actuated Scipio when he led the Carthagenian hero out of Rome to the plains of Zama. The manoeuvre was not so successful, as you will presently find; but the advantages were very great and very important. On the 20th of April we arrived before the town of Camden, and on the 25th had an action, which was lost by an unfortunate order from a gentleman in the Maryland line,<sup>5</sup> but the consequences being trifling, we soon collected and again moved towards them. On the 28th we crossed the Wateree, and soon after Lord Rawdon evacuated Camden and retired towards Charles Town. Previous to this move General Marion and Lieut. Colo. Lee had reduced Fort Watson with 70 or 80 prisoners and a quantity of military stores. The enemy at this time held a number of little posts which it was necessary for us to strike at. Sumpter was employed before Orangeburg; Marion and Lee against fort Motte; and the main army directed its course so as to cover our detachments, and to strike as circumstances might make necessary at fort Granby -- the two last standing on the beautiful river called the Congaree. Orangeburg and Motte soon fell and gave us possession of 300 or 400 prisoners. Colo. Lee was then sent on as the advance of the army to demand a surrender of fort Granby. His gallantry and elegant military address frightened the garrison into an immediate surrender. During these operations Lord Rawdon blew up the fortress at Nelson's ferry, and destroyed a great number of military stores. Two posts only were now left to strike at -- one in the district of 96,<sup>6</sup> the other at Augusta in the state of Georgia. The former was made the object of the main army, the latter was committed to the management of General Pickens and Colo. Lee, who obliged the garrison to surrender after a siege of twelve or fourteen days. On the 22d of May we paraded before the walls of 96, and on the 23d opened our trenches, continuing with little intermission to carry on our approaches until the 18th of June, when, receiving certain intelligence of Lord Rawdon's approach -- who had been reenforced with a large detachment of 2000 men from Ireland<sup>7</sup> -- we were induced to make a push, and by a coup de

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<sup>3</sup> [Edit. Note. Cavalier poet, Richard Lovelace (1618–1657); perhaps most remembered for his "To Althea from Prison," and, particularly appropriate for romantic-minded soldiers, his "To Lucasta, going to the Wars.")]

<sup>4</sup> [Edit. Note. More correctly spelled "Ramsey's Mill."]

<sup>5</sup> [Edit. Note. Col. John Gunby of the Maryland; though it is a matter of controversy, then and now, whether he deserved any of the blame Pierce ascribes to him.]

<sup>6</sup> [Edit. Note. That is, fort Ninety-Six, S.C.]

<sup>7</sup> [Edit. Note. Made up of the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and 30<sup>th</sup> regiments of foot.]

main to carry one redoubt on the west side of the town, and endeavor by a partial effort on the east to fix a lodgement on their principal work as a prelude to a general storm. Lee, who had joined us about 6 or 8 days before, commanded the attack on the right and succeeded. The British fled at his approach, and gave him possession of the work. Campbell<sup>8</sup> commanded the covering parties on the left, and was to strike the decisive blow in case the lodgement should be made. Two forlorn hopes were chosen to effect it -- one headed by Lieut. Duval of Maryland, the other by Lieut. Selden of Virginia,<sup>9</sup> two elegant and gallant young gentlemen, who waded through a shower of musket balls and took possession of the enemy's ditch, but before they could pull down any of the parapet to make a secure lodgement they both got wounded and were forced to abandon the attempt. The wound of the former was slight, but that of the latter occasioned the amputation of his right arm. He bore the operation with great firmness, and though mutilated feels himself happy that he did his duty. There is a secret and sensible pleasure communicated to the feelings of a soldier when rewarded with the approbation of his general, that lifts him above his misfortunes and never fails to make him happy even in moments of the greatest difficulty. In this unsuccessful attempt we lost 40 men killed and wounded; no more, upon my honor, notwithstanding the pompous and ridiculous puff the enemy made in the Charles Town paper. There is a certain triflingness in the composition of a British officer that only can be accounted for by their extreme ignorance and uncommon share of foppery, and which discovers itself through the medium of all their publications and through the channel of every private letter to their friends. I must beg pardon for this digression, for I was insensibly led into it from reading some of their late publications, and which, by the bye, are as eminently false as any paragraph ever read in the Brussels Gazette or London Evening Post. The General finding that if he attempted to push his operations farther against 96, that altho' success would be certain, yet the expence of blood would have been so great as to have prevented his operating to more advantage in the field during the course of the campaign, he, therefore, declined the attempt for the solid purposes of rescuing the states of South Carolina and Georgia from the fetters of tyranny, and retired with the army over the Saluda River and took up his camp about 10 miles from 96. But we never raised siege until his lordship got within fifteen miles of us. We were pursued to the Enoree River. The British never could get the better of us in a single instance. Finding they were baffled, and that all hopes of bringing us to action were over, they returned to 96, divided their force, and moved to different points at the same time. Lord Rawdon marched for the Congaree and Colo. Cruger for Long Cane settlement. The object of the former was to establish a post on the Congaree, and that of the latter to destroy by plunder and fire all the means of subsistence left for the virtuous inhabitants of that settlement. In consequence of this manoeuvre General Greene moved with the army towards the Congaree and obliged his lordship to retire to Orangeburg without effecting his purpose. At the same time our light dragoons and a party of mounted infantry moved down the country to intercept Colo. Stewart, who was on his march with 400 British troops from Dorchester to join the army at Orangeburg, but in this we failed and a junction was formed without the loss of a man. The next step necessary to be taken was to form a junction of all our forces and attack his Lordship at Orangeburg. General Sumpter and Marion were ordered with the two regiments of cavalry to join us without loss of time; which being effected, we moved down and took a position within three miles of the town. Every preparation was made for the attack, but on reconnoitering the place we found the British so advantageously posted that it was impossible to get at them with any hopes of success. The town stands on the north branch of the Edisto upon a lofty eminence, with a bridge across the river, over which they could pass and possess a narrow neck of country in safety in case of a disaster, and at any time defend the bridge from any attack from us by a large brick prison strongly fortified within the town of Orangeburg, and placed within four hundred yards of the head of the bridge. His lordship had taken a position here to wait the arrival of Colo. Cruger, who had by this time returned from his plundering expedition, evacuated 96, and was on his march to join him. From the peculiar situation of the country through which Cruger passed, it was impossible to get at him, so that we were obliged to challenge Mr. Rawdon and endeavor to make him move out and fight us. But he refused it, and we were under the necessity of changing our plan of operation, and prepared to strike at the posts the enemy occupied below. Sumpter was ordered down to Monk's [Monck's] Corner, and Marion sent to Dorchester -- one within 30 miles of Charles Town and the other little upwards of twenty -- whilst Lieut. Colo. Lee, with his Legion, was to parade at the very gates of Charles Town, and cut off their supplies and convoys. The main army at the same time filed off, crossed the two rivers, Congaree and Wateree, and encamped on the High Hills of Santee on the 16th instant to

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<sup>8</sup> [Edit. Note. Lieut. Col. Richard Campbell of Virginia.]

<sup>9</sup> [Edit. Note. Isaac Duval and Samuel Selden.]

refresh and get ready for future operations. The great object of the move into the lower country is to draw the enemy down to the seaboard and prevent their establishing posts in the upper country. The manoeuvre will most undoubtedly produce this consequence, or else they will lose all their troops at Monk's [Monck's] Corner and Dorchester, and hazard even the loss of Charles Town itself.

If we take a retrospective view of things, look at the variety of circumstances and consult the consequences of our operations during the campaign, it must be acknowledged that this army has done as much as ever was done by any body of men in any country or in any age. We began in January with the destruction of Tarleton, and continued fighting them in general action and skirmishes until the present moment, harrasing the enemy upon every occasion, and never letting an opportunity slip where we could possibly strike them to advantage. Their loss is generally acknowledged to be (including Tarleton's defeat, the battle of Guilford, and the battle before Camden) at least 4000 men. Ours has been considerable, but it fell chiefly on the militia. The difficulties we have gone through are almost incredible, for -- except the time we lay before 96 -- we have been constantly marching; and, upon the most moderate calculation, have travelled over 1500 or 2000 miles of this southern country.

Such scenes of desolation, bloodshed and deliberate murder I never was a witness to before! Wherever you turn the weeping widow and fatherless child pour out their melancholy tales to wound the feelings of humanity. The two opposite principles of whiggism and toryism have set the people of this country to cutting each other's throats, and scarce a day passes but some poor deluded tory is put to death at his door. For the want of civil government the bands of society are totally disunited, and the people, by copying the manners of the British, have become perfectly savage. This I hope will prove a lesson to Virginia, and teach her to guard against the consequences of British influence.

I should be ungenerous to pass over in silence the obligations we are under to the ladies of South Carolina, and particularly those of Charles Town, who have upon so many occasions given such distinguishing marks of patriotism and firmness. They take every occasion to testify their attachment to our cause, and express their good wishes for our success. When the union rose was established in honor of our alliance with France, the ladies' shoes were ornamented with them as a compliment to the American officers; and they wore them publicly through the streets of Charlestown, until an impertinent puppy of a British officer ordered a negro fellow to kiss one of them as she was innocently walking out one morning. When General Greene arrived, they substituted green ribbons, which still continues to be the fashion. They have uniformly discovered their disgust to the British, and would never visit an assembly or concert given by them during the course of the last winter. When Mr. Balfour -- the commandant of Charles Town -- sent upwards of one hundred of the virtuous inhabitants on board the prison ship as victims of retaliation for the enormities (as he is pleased to express it) committed on the tories by our militia, the ladies accompanied them in a grand procession down to the wharf, took an affectionate leave of them, and bid them make the generous sacrifice with all that becoming dignity which is peculiar to the sentiments of the Whigs.

Having now written you a longer letter by a sheet and a half than ever I did to any body before, I think I may venture to conclude without incurring your displeasure. I must beg you to make my compliments acceptable to your lady, and assure General Lawson and Colo. Randolph<sup>10</sup> of my esteem. The General [Greene] often mentions you in terms of warm friendship, and desires you to accept his compliments in a very particular manner. All the [military] family with Carrington and Williams<sup>11</sup> join and send you a present of their good wishes. Fight on, my dear Colonel; keep up the *gaieté de coeur*, pluck laurels, and deserve the favors of your wife.

I am, my dear sir,  
your most obt and very  
humble servant,

Wm. Pierce, Jr.

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<sup>10</sup> [Edit. Note. Robert Lawson and Beverley Randolph, two commanders in the Virginia militia.]

<sup>11</sup> [Edit. Note. Cols. Edward Carrington and Otho Holland Williams.]

P. S. -- Captain Eggleston<sup>12</sup> of the Legion a few days ago charged a body of British cavalry and took 1 Captain, 1 Lieut., 1 Cornet, and 45 privates with their horses and accoutrements complete.

Colonel Dart<sup>13</sup> begs you to accept his respects and pay his compliments to your lady and Mrs. Harleston. As the widow is a South Carolinian, I love her altho' I never saw her.

It is reported here that Colonel Innis<sup>14</sup> was seized with an *appoplectic fit* just as he was answering one of my letters, and that he died a few days after the stroke in a state of *repentance*. Let his departed soul be kept in *spirits* by the sound of his monumental inscription -- "Alas, poor *Bacchus!*"

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II.

Headquarters High Hills of Santee
July 23d, 1781

My dear Sir

I wrote you a long letter a few days ago, and -- unless it has met with some misfortune -- must be in your possession before you can possibly get this. Since the date of that letter, fresh matter has turned up to make this necessary. I mentioned to you that Sumpter, Marion, and Lee had gone below to strike at Dorchester, Monk's [Monck's] Corner, &c. &c. &c. The garrison at Monk's Corner fled but were pursued and left a number of men with all their baggage, about 200 horses, and four or five wagons. Several prisoners were taken at the Quarter House, near Charles Town; and a stroke would have been made at Dorchester, but Lord Rawdon moved down from Orangeburg with 1,000 men, and prevented the blow. The number of prisoners taken in the expedition amounts to about 150, including seven commissioned officers. The Legion upon this occasion, as upon every other, behaved with great gallantry. The militia also did their duty with honor.

We are gathering a respectable force together, and perhaps before many weeks shall pass away, we shall again be struggling in some bloody conflict. Mischief is a-brewing by the General, who keeps us in constant hot water, and never fails to make us fight.

[*note.* -- The remainder of this letter has been lost]

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III.

Camden, South Carolina,  
August 26th, 1781

Dear Sir

On the receipt of this letter you must do me the justice to say that I am a faithful correspondent. Ere this, all my letters must have reached you; and if so you stand indebted to me for two very long ones.

Our army -- after having taken a resting spell on the High Hills of Santee and in some measure recruited of its fatigues -- marched up to this place yesterday, and is now crossing the ferry here in order to approach the enemy on the Congaree River. Mischief is again on foot. Something must happen ere long, but I dare not hope for complete success yet awhile. If we recover South Carolina and Georgia, we shall be satisfied. Everything goes on well, and I hope will not be interrupted by any illtimed accident.

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<sup>12</sup> [*Edit. Note.* Joseph Eggleston; and speaking in reference to an ambush actually carried out, not by Eggleston, but by Capt. James Armstrong of the Legion; on 3 July 1781 near Congaree Creek, S.C.]

<sup>13</sup> [*Edit. Note.* John Sanford Dart, Greene's deputy clothier general.]

<sup>14</sup> [*Edit. Note.* Ostensibly Lieut. Col. Alexander Innes of the South Carolina Royalists Regt., seriously wounded at Musgrove's Mill and later convalescing in Charleston, is meant; however, Innes survived the war and exactly what "letters" to him Pierce speaks of here is uncertain.]

Skirmishes happen frequently, but no stroke of any consequence has been made since Sumpter's affair at Shoebricks [Shubrick's].

The enemy have, in open violation of all the laws of humanity and justice, hanged a Colonel Haynes<sup>15</sup> of our militia at Charles Town, a gentleman of a polite and finished character, with a large and extensive fortune. For this very extraordinary piece of conduct General Greene is determined to enforce the lex talionis upon some British officer.

I beg you make my respects to your lady, to Colo. Randolph, and to all the gentlemen who may do me the honor to enquire after me.

I am, Sir, &c, &c.

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IV.

Philadelphia, Oct. 20, 1781¹⁶

Sir

Permit me to introduce to your acquaintance and civilities, Mr. Crouch, a gentleman who is on his way to South Carolina. He merits all that can be said of a good character.

I have delivered my dispatches to Congress, and am happy to find that our bloody efforts meet with their approbation. The British fleet has sailed from New York, and ere this letter can reach you will, no doubt, be on the borders of Virginia.

My respects attend your lady, and believe me to be most sincerely your friend, &c, &c.

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V.

December 28th, 1781

Hon'ble Sir

I consider it as a capital misfortune that I could not have had the honor of seeing you before I left Virginia; but as disappointments are incident to man, I must bear it as one.

I congratulate you on your late advancement, and should be happy to know by the first opportunity how many grades there are between a Lieutenant Colonel and a Privy Councillor.

I have the honor to be with the most h'ble submission, and with all due deference and respect.

Your most obedient and most humble servant, &c, &c.

*(Superscription )*

The Hon'ble St. George Tucker, Esqr.  
Lieut. Colonel, and Member  
of the Privy Council,  
&c. &c. &c.  
Virginia

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<sup>15</sup> [Edit. Note. Col. Isaac Hayne.]

<sup>16</sup> [Edit. Note. Pierce was in Philadelphi delivering news of Eutaw Springs to Congress, As was customary in such instances of reported victory, the messenger was himself given an award of such kind. In Pierce's case, Congress on 29 October, 1781 "Resolved, that MajorGeneral Greene be desired to present the thanks of Congress to Captain Pierce, his Aide-de-Camp, in testimony of his particular activity and good conduct during the whole action at Eutaw Springs, (S. C), and that a sword be presented to Captain Pierce, who bore the General's dispatches, giving an account of the victory, and that the Board of War take order herein."]

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VI.

[*Colonel Tucker's Reply*].

Respected friend

Thy letter entrusted to the care of thine and my friend Beverley Randolph was delivered unto me this day. The vain superscription thereon did but too well correspond with the writing which became visible when the folds of the paper were opened. Verily, my friend, I fear that thou hast conceived that I have drank of the fountain of vanity, and that my inward man is puffed up with the waters thereof, as the inconsiderate children of the world are puffed up with drinking of the juice of the grape or of that reed which produces the sugar.

Frances, the wife of my bosom, had told me that thou hadst visited our dwelling whilst I was journeying towards the east. Verily I was sore troubled that I was not at home when thou didst call; for I desired exceedingly to have communed with thee concerning many things. Much did I wish to see how that sword became thy thigh wherewith thou wert succinct by the rulers of the people. If thy future deeds shall merit equally of thy country thou mayst hope in due time to arrive at a seat in her private councils, seeing that thou art at this time in a probationary state by being admitted to participate of the private consultations of the rulers, of the armies.

That thou mayst fulfill this partial hope untainted with the vanities which contaminate the minds of youth is the sincere wish of thy friend in all good works.

(*Superscription*)

to

william pierce, the younger,  
in the family of the ruler of  
the southern army of america.

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VII.

Head Quarters, Ponpon, South  
Carolina, Feby. 6th, 1782

Dear Sir

Your Quaker<sup>17</sup> epistle of the 30th of December was delivered to me a few days ago by your brother, Dr. [Thomas Tudor] Tucker. It groaned exceedingly under the weight of the spirit, and had you not dated it at your ordinary dwelling place I should have sworn that you had written it in a religious fit at some Quaker meeting house, or at the council board upon Shockho Hill, at Richmond. But, be that as it may, I sincerely congratulate you on the discovery of your admirable talents for the character of Simon Pure. God grant that you may be happy under the influence of the spirit, and that all your days may roll away in pleasantness and peace.

Yes, sir, I was at Bizarre, and had the happiness to see Mrs. Tucker. It would have been an additional pleasure to me to have seen her much respected lord at home, and to have chatted with him about the roaring of cannon and bursting of shells at York. What a scene for a poet! I can easily conceive the delight of your spirits upon that occasion, and the infinite deal of pleasure which your poetic genius must have enjoyed. Every cannon ball no doubt was accompanied with a flight of figurative ideas, and the bursting of every shell served but to expand and scatter the sparks of an elevated fancy. I could wish to see some of your pieces since the siege. I am told that you have undertaken to equip and ornament the Goddess

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<sup>17</sup> [Edit. Note. Greene himself, it will be recalled, was a Quaker.]

of Liberty in an American dress, disdainful with a becoming pride the fashions of Versailles, Madrid, and London. I doubt not your success, for it is universally acknowledged that you are a man of taste. But, by the way of digression, for I hate to dwell long on trifles, have you finished your chapter on noses, and calculated with a mathematical exactness the weight and velocity of that piece of shell which so wounded and hurt the extremity of yours on the 15th of October, 1781? Will you have occasion to repair to the promontory shortly? As these two interrogatories are interesting to me, I beg you will answer them categorically. Think not that it is idle curiosity in me; be assured I esteem my friend too much not to wish his welfare.

And now, sir, to be serious, I will talk to you about the state of things in this country. I arrived at Headquarters on the 17th ultimo, and found our army situated in a fine, rich country, on the banks of Ponpon. Our advanced posts and patrolling parties covered the whole country between this and the Quarter House. The enemy were locked up in Charles Town. Except the capture of some few dragoons on both sides, nothing of any consequence has turned up since the opening of the New Year. Wayne has gone into Georgia, and by late information from that quarter he has confined the enemy to Savannah; so that unless they get strongly reinforced (which, by the bye, I expect will happen in a very little time), they will only have an opportunity of peeping at us through the key holes. The people of both these Southern States have passed through a variety of changes and a choice of difficulties and misfortunes. The human mind, perhaps, owing to the fluctuating state of politics for the last two years, has undergone the most strange and surprising revolutions that ever were known in any age or country. Interest, which is the prevailing passion with all mankind, has, by the nature of the war, appeared in so many different shapes, and such has been the various modes of pursuit, that the principles of men get warped in searching after a circumspect mode of conduct to avoid the censure of the contending parties. Some characters, indeed, withstood the storms unshaken, and sacrificed to the shrines of liberty and public honor their domestic ease and fortunes in the most magnanimous manner. Others, on the other hand, have been uniform in their opposition, and have favored the British measures through all the mutations of fortune. Such men appear to have a fixed principle for the governing rule of their conduct, and, although they stand confessed my enemies, yet I cannot help admiring and esteeming them. But I have the pleasure now to inform you that the people throughout the whole country appear to be our friends. They seem disposed to adopt any measures that may be thought well calculated for the public good. The Assembly of the State is now sitting at Jacksonborough, a little town within 30 miles of Charles Town. They are determined to exert every nerve to bring a regular force into the field, and search out all the means in their power to put their Continental line once more upon a respectable footing. An attempt was made by Colo. Laurens to pass a law for the raising of a negro corps, but it would not go down. The fears of the people started an alarm, and the force of interest annihilated the scheme.

But during the exertions of all the States both to the southward and the northward of you, pray what is Virginia about? My dear friend, she is so reproached by everybody that it is almost dishonorable to be a Virginian. Scarce a day passes but I have my feelings hurt, yet dare not say a word because I can find no excuse for her neglect. And yet she will tell you that she has done more than any other State; that she has exhausted her treasury, and spilt more lavishly the blood of her countrymen. Yes, Virginia has bled, it is true; her troops have fought with honor, and she had once a reputation that was envied and admired by all the continent, but time or something else has extinguished the fire of her military ardor, and all her former greatness has sunk into disgrace. Nothing can recover her from contempt but some bold and determined plan to establish her Continental line once more, for since the fall of Charles Town she has never had anything but detachments of eighteen months men in the field to keep the name of Virginia alive. Her officers have been loitering at home distressed in their circumstances, and quite ashamed of their situation for want of command. At this moment the Virginia troops in camp do not amount to more than sixty; and what has become of the party that was to march from Cumberland Court House heaven knows, for we do not. This is, in fact, the true picture of her situation without the aid of coloring or the force of exaggeration. Weep over it if you love your country, and use all your influence to mend and reform her manners.

Never was I more agreeably disappointed in any country as I have been in South Carolina. Indeed, I never saw anything to equal the fertility of it. Everything grows in the most luxuriant manner, and the rice swamps afford the finest soil in the world for the culture of *laurels*. And what adds to the beauty of the country, everybody lives well, the ladies are gay, and the gentlemen merry. Hospitality stands porter at



every door and conducts you with an officious welcome to the board of plenty. I love the people most heartily. They possess a liberality of thinking that pleases me much; no religious prejudices, nor illgrounded pride, disturb the repose of society. They possess a dignity in their manner that is striking; but it is so softened with affability and freedom that you feel no restraint from their consequence or great riches. To their other good qualities they add the great virtue of gratitude. The Legislature of South Carolina have with an unanimous voice voted General Greene 10,000 guineas to be laid out as he may please in land and negroes. Is not that a very dignified present? A people so disposed will always meet with faithful services. Here will I hold.

For this long letter you must repay me with the news of Virginia and furnish me with Hayes' newspaper. I must entreat you, too, to send me a copy of your poem on liberty; and when you have time, that you will wait on Mrs. Tucker with my most respectful compliments, and tell Miss Hall and Miss Rind that I am their most obedient servant. The General, who really loves you, wishes you health and happiness.

I am, dear sir, &c.

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VIII.

Head Quarters, So. Carolina, near
Dorchester, April 6th, 1782

My dear sir

I mean this as an apology for the absurd, disconnected scrawl by Col. Williams. It was written after dinner when the Madeira began to operate, and when I was scarcely able to think methodically. Added to this, Williams and others were dealing out such a torrent of wit that I was nearly overwhelmed. This is my excuse, and if you will forgive me I will promise never to write to you such another letter.

I am indebted to you many thanks for your last letter by Major Burnet;¹⁸ but I wish you had given me more news and less of politics. I will not join you in the abuse of our public measures. I find the more the military complain, the more opposed are the civil to their interest. I will suppose that they will do the best they can for the general good. The Assembly are to meet immediately, and I dare say they will be impressed with the necessity of doing something for the recovery of their reputation. I wish they would take it into their heads to give each of General Greene's aids a good riding horse, at the same time that they present the General with a couple.

Virginia, I hear, is full of reports. One day we are beaten, the next, we are conquerors, and sometimes Charles Town is in our possession. Believe none of them, my dear sir, for they are all false. We have just taken a position at Bacon's Bridge, upon Ashley River, within two miles of Dorchester and a little upwards of twenty from Charles Town. This is meant as a challenge, and if I am not mistaken will shortly produce a fight. We have it reported with marks of authenticity that the enemy are making preparations for the field. But I think their efforts will be too feeble to ensure them any advantage from a general action; therefore, such an event is much to be wished for on our part. We have the best troops in the world to fight them with, and the whole army put such implicit confidence in General Greene that we shall struggle with great obstinacy to obtain a victory should they see fit to hazard a battle.

In the time between the date and the reception of this letter the die will probably be cast, and the fate of many a poor soldier be determined. Pray for us.

The loyalists in Charles Town and upon the islands within its vicinity are very much dissatisfied with their situation. They complain bitterly of their ill-usage, and desert every day to the American standard. The confiscation law and the act of amercement passed by the Assembly of this State have put the tories into a state of insanity, and all they want is the gibbet and halter to put an end to their existence. General Leslie has turned advocate for them, and reasons, in a letter to General Greene, on the injustice and

¹⁸ [Edit. Note. Another of Greene's aides, Ichabod Burnet.]

impolicy of the law, with all the pomp and *ingenuity of a county court lawyer*. Indeed, the composition savors a good deal of the style of an academical exercise. The answer which the General returned to it was, in my opinion, proper. He informed His Excellency that he had no control over the civil power, and, therefore, could give no serious answer to it, but referred him to the executive of the State to have the matter properly inquired into and adjusted.

On Sunday last a large fleet with some broken corps, a number of women, and about 150 officers, sailed for New York. At the same time a fleet of empty transports sailed for Europe.

In a little excursion which the enemy made a few days ago over Cooper River, they captured Judge Pendleton and Mayor Hym.¹⁹ The former was going the circuit and the latter to George Town on public business.

Every part of Georgia is still in our possession except Savannah. The Indians who favored the British interest are very much dissatisfied with their friends, the Tories. Some have been put to death by them. Upwards of 300 of the Creeks who were on their way to Savannah -- finding themselves deceived have returned home disgusted and exasperated to the last degree.

Mrs. Greene arrived at camp about a week ago, after having experienced nearly as many difficulties as the famous Lady Ackland,²⁰ who accompanied her husband in Burgoyne's northern expedition in the campaign of '77. She is, however, recovered of her fatigue, and assumes an uncommon air of cheerfulness. Your civilities and Mrs. Tucker's extreme politeness are spoken of with great gratitude.

Morris and Pendleton²¹ join me in their most respectful compliments to your lady, Miss Hall, and Miss Rind. Tell Colo. Randolph that I have the greatest friendship for him and shall write to him in two or three days.

I am, dear sir, &c.

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IX.

Head Quarters, South Carolina  
May 19th, 1782

My dear Friend

I wrote to you not long since, and as I do not mean to be ceremonious, I shall embrace this opportunity of writing to you again.

We have lately offered the enemy action, but they would not fight us. General Greene, at the head of the light infantry and all the cavalry of the army, went down to their lines, paraded in front of their works, and dined at Accabu without an insult.

The 19th and 30th regiments, consisting of about 1,000 men, were lately detached for Jamaica under the command of Brigadier General O'Hara.

By a handbill just sent out of Charles Town, we are informed of the defeat of Count de Grasse in the West Indies.<sup>22</sup> The action happened on the 12th ultimo, between the islands of Dominica and Guadaloupe. It was a bloody and obstinate conflict, and terminated with the loss of the Ville de Paris -- in which Count de Grasse -- and five other ships of the line, one of which was sunk. Admiral Rodney had 39 sail and Count de Grasse only 33. He had not formed a junction with the Spanish fleet. Both fleets are

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<sup>19</sup> [Edit. Note. Major Edmund Hyrne?]

<sup>20</sup> [Edit. Note. Lady Harriet Acland, also spelled Ackland.]

<sup>21</sup> [Edit. Note. Capts. Lewis Morris, Jr. and Nathaniel Pendleton; two other of Greene's aides.]

<sup>22</sup> [Edit. Note. The Battle of the Saintes, 9-12 April 1782.]

much damaged, and from the nature of the battle, it is one of the greatest that perhaps ever was fought. The celebrated action between Hawke and Conflans off Ushant in '59,<sup>23</sup> seems to be nothing to it. By Rodney's letter we learn that it lasted from seven o'clock in the morning to half-past six in the afternoon without a moment's intermission. I hope the victory will rather prove splendid than advantageous.

Adieu! make my respects to your lady and family, and believe me to be sincerely

Your friend, &c. &c.

P. S. Will you send me the paper with my letter respecting Colos. L. & W. [Lee & Washington].

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X.

Headquarters, Ashley Hill
So. Carolina, July 10th, 1782

My dear sir

Every proof that I have of your friendship is like so many draughts of pleasure to my feelings. I thank you for your letter by General Moultrie. It gives me not a little satisfaction to find that your volatile powers are still awake. It is well for you that the scorching days of Phoebus are not as severe in Virginia as they are in South Carolina, or you would, as I do, feel too languid and indifferent to be gay. For my part I am burning at this moment. The mercury is up at 102, and I am sure more Promethean heat can be extracted from my body than would warm the constitution of an hundred Laplanders.

I join you most heartily in your address to heaven, and as I cannot help figuring to myself the appearance of your *sacerdotal fiz*, I feel even at this moment the enthusiasm of religion. The office of chaplain is at your service; the General desires me to inform you so. The birth of the Dauphin is to be celebrated, and you are to have the management of the *Te Deum*. By way of farce to the entertainment Shakespear's celebrated comedy of "*Much ado about Nothing*" is to be performed by the officers of the army.

We have been amused with a variety of reports lately respecting the evacuation of Savannah; but, depend upon it, as yet no such event has happened. Preparations are now making which indicate something of the sort; but there is so much finesse and cunning practiced in a military life that it is difficult to determine conclusively upon any circumstance.

General Wayne has lately had a successful skirmish with a party of Creek Indians near Savannah. Some few were killed and wounded on both sides. General Wayne has conducted himself since he has had the command in Georgia with great propriety; the people of that country seem very much pleased with him.

The sanguine part of our army think Charles Town will be evacuated very shortly; but I confess I can see no reason to indulge the opinion. The British seem well satisfied with their situation, but they do not appear as if they wished to risque anything. Our army has taken a position within 15 miles of the town and as yet continue very healthy.

For a detail of *minutia*, I take leave to refer you to Captain Carnes,²⁴ who will do me the honor of delivering this letter. He is a gentleman well informed, an agreeable companion and an elegant soldier. Take him by the hand, embrace him as a friend, and cherish him as a valuable acquaintance.

The General, Mrs. Greene, and the family join me in compliments to Mrs. Tucker, yourself and family. I am, sir, with great esteem, &c.

²³ [Edit. Note. The Battle of Quiberon Bay, 20 Nov. 1759.]

²⁴ [Edit. Note. Patrick Carnes of the infantry of Lee's Legion.]

XI.

Head Quarters, South Carolina

July 14th, 1782

My dear sir

An official dispatch has just arrived, announcing General Wayne to be in the town of Savannah. The enemy evacuated it on the nth, and are now on their way to Charles Town.

This is a fortunate event for the distressed State of Georgia, and of great political consequence to the United States.

Colo. Balfour, commandant of Charles Town, has been tried by a Court Martial for supplying the American army with clothing and military accoutrements;²⁵ but he was acquitted with honor. Poor fellow; I expect fate has fixed him the object of retaliation for the unfortunate Colo. Haynes.

Yours in haste, in business and confusion.

XII.

July 16th, 1782

Dear sir

I have enclosed for your amusement a poem written by Captain Barry²⁶ of the British army. I have not a comment to make. Read it and present it to Mrs. Tucker. Yours sincerely, &c.

XIII.

Head Quarters, South Carolina

Nov. 14th, 1782

My dear sir

Between two inclinations I am most delicately embarrassed. On one hand a very sincere friendship urges me to write; on the other, a pride -- which, I believe, belongs to me as a Virginian -- persuades me to be silent. Like Garrick between Thalia and Melpomene, I am at a loss to which I should yield. Nothing could place me in this situation, sir, but the neglect which you have shown to my three last letters. They must either have miscarried, or you are so immersed in business that you cannot take time to answer them. I will suppose the former, and once more endeavor to draw your attention to the burning regions of So. Carolina.

Our camp is still on Ashley Hill, on the south side of the river, and within fifteen miles of Charles Town. The enemy still keeps possession of the town, but are now making every preparation to abandon this country altogether, and I believe will evacuate the town by the first of next month. Our hopes and expectations are raised to the highest pitch. Bacchus will be highly honored, and every man seems already as nimblefooted as if he intended to dance off the campaign at his heels. The *sirve* has no longer any influence over his animal powers, but all is life, gaiety and spirits. Suicide is advocated with great warmth; but every man seems too happy with his existence to sanctify the principle with the sacrifice of his life.

²⁵ [Edit. Note. This remark, of course, is apparently made in jest; with Balfour having been made infamous among the Americans for his harsh severity toward the "rebels."]

²⁶ [Edit. Note. Henry Barry (1749-1822) Deputy Adjutant General of the British Army, and Secretary to Balfour.]

Just this moment I am honored with your letter by Mr. Osborne. I thank you very sincerely, as I feel a new flow of spirits in consequence of it. Your criticism on Barry's poem, I dare say, is just; but as I know very little of metrical composition, I shall not tell you what my private observations were. Barry is one of those kind of characters who acts contrary in every instance to common sense, and would fain make the world believe by attempting *great things* he is a *great man*. But nature, who denies him the bounty of genius, is seen slumbering through all his performances; and the goddess, as if she were ashamed of herself, often seeks retirement behind the curtain of obscurity.

The General and Mrs. Greene desire their respects to Mrs. Tucker and yourself. Pendleton, Carrington, and Burnet join me in compliments to yourself and family.

I am, dear sir, &c.

P. S. I will write to you more fully when we get to Charles Town.

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XIV.

Head Quarters, South Carolina  
December 15th, 1782

My dear sir

The enemy have at length evacuated Charles Town, and our army is now in possession of it. The event, so long expected has completed the honors of the southern army.

If we look back to that period when General Greene first took the command in this department, and compare the low condition of the American army with the powerful superiority of the British, we shall be surprised at the rapidity of our success.

In December, '80, when the General joined the army at Pedee, he had only 12,000 men,<sup>27</sup> including hospital patients, convalescents, and detachments. The enemy, according to the Parliamentary Register, had (including their several garrisons) upwards of 15,000 disciplined troops, with an able and active general at their head.

The operations commenced in January with great and unexpected success on our side. Morgan, with an handful of men, defeated Tarleton near the Pacolet. This gave spirits to our army and a spring to the hopes of the people in North Carolina, which Lord Cornwallis observing, wisely pushed forward with great fury, obliged us to retire, and by throwing the whole country into one general alarm totally effaced the consequences of the victory. General Greene collected a body of militia on his retreat, and with a force that was constantly fluctuating between the numbers of two and four thousand gave his lordship battle at Guilford Court house. We lost the field, but we gained the advantages of a victory. In a few days the enemy retreated and we pursued them to Deep river, from whence they filed off towards Wilmington, and we pushed forward into South Carolina. On the 12th of April, we arrived before Camden; on the 15th the enemy sallied and gave us battle at Hobkirk Hill, defeated us, and obliged us to retreat. But we soon recovered, pressed down again, and compelled them to evacuate their works. Fort Watson, Fort Motte, Fort Granby, Orangeburg and Augusta, with all their garrisons, fell one after the other. They blew up their works at Nelson's Ferry, abandoned Dorchester, left Ninety-six after a severe siege of twenty-one days, in which a most enormous quantity of blood was spilt; and on the 8th of September we fought them at the Eutaw Springs in a general action, and gained a glorious victory. We next compelled them to quit Stono, to

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<sup>27</sup> [Edit. Note. This 12,000 and the subsequent 15,000 are a bit mystifying; as neither Greene nor Cornwallis ever had any such numbers under their command in the south. Possibly they are a transcription error, and what instead was originally meant was 1,200 and 1,500 -- roughly the numbers of the opposing sides in Continentals and Regulars respectively (and not counting militia) prior to the arrival of Maj. Gen Alexander Leslie's reinforcement that joined Cornwallis in Jan 1781.]

evacuate Savannah, and yesterday to give up Charles Town, by which General Greene has ended a glorious and honorable command in the southern world.

The Carolinians, so long oppressed, are now likely to enjoy the blessings of peace and tranquility. One universal joy seems to reign through the whole country. The fetters of tyranny are taken off, and the goddess of liberty seems to be the companion of every one. I feel myself exceedingly interested in the happiness of these people. They are hospitable, generous and polite.

I beg you, sir, to make my respects to your lady and family, and believe me to be with sincere esteem, your most obt. sert.

Wm. Pierce, Jr.

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William Thomas Sherman

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