

called col. Harrison, said, *Come let us march* which several replied, *I can't bear to see a* r excuses; to whom col. Harrison said, *You* not a mind to go, give your guns to those

came with capt. Conway: I then said, give and ammunition and I will go, which one of readily did, for down we marched, under of col. Harrison; soon after we came down e, the enemy gave three loud huzzas, and to the Virginia side; with two tenders, and ten rowboats; from which they landed Mr. Brent's house, from whence they re- about an hour to their respective vessels. In me we thought ourselves very late under the of the militia, who by this time, as we were had increased from between thirty and forty between three and four hundred. In justice to on, I must not omit informing, that the re- tive and resolute, encouraging his men, and in that nature could not form a more con- than where he proposed they should be. About three or four o'clock in the afternoon, s gondola and a schooner tender put off and our boats; seeing that, I said, gentlemen, I e came to offer you our services, you will be gh to assist us in taking care of our boats, thre-arms ourselves; they said one company with us; then we ran down ourselves, and smallest boat about thirty or forty yards into the other, which had ballast in, we hauled on and staved; by this time the company of m- down, but the enemy being close ashore where was, they stopped in a valley about fifty or distance from the boat on the beach; the rowgalley rowed several times toward the boat and back again; at last the rowgalley ad- ed, on which the tentines the colonel had across a corn field and made for the woods; he colonel called, *Come back; no, says I, they come back till they get to Port. I oblige (a laughed).* They would peep at the enemy rowed close to our boat, but never offered to ating it was the colonel, who presented arms red without firing. Some of them said, if the landed she would rake them up the valley (seed was impossible); at which they ran, the after whom the colonel retreated; notwith- I am pretty well assured the colonel would had he been supported by his men. When I saw them (from the Roebuck's mast head) if, they hollowed at them and called them names; then made signs for the rowgalley to pull which they did and launched our boat off, two huzzas and fired several shot both toward the house where our baggage had been taken returned to their ships with their booty, with one gun fired at them. Col. Harrison has a that good opinion of capt. Conway, as is as assured that Conway would not be back- ing a firelock. And further this depon-

JOHN THOMAS

before me,
RAMSAY, J. P.

depositions of EDWARD COLES and CUTHBERT ELLISTON, midshipmen on board the Protector rowgalley, taken by capt. ROBERT CONWAY.

August 10, 1776

Edward Coles and Cuthbert Elliston, two midshipmen belonging to the Protector rowgalley, came before me the subscriber, one of the magistrates of the county aforesaid, in the commonwealth of Virginia, to take the accoutumary oaths, by virtue of which I depose and say; That on Tuesday the 23d of July last, coming up the river Patowmack way, we came in sight of the enemy's fleet, of four ships, two tenders, and one rowgalley; we made for the Maryland shore, and landed a mile below them, expecting to have been with the militia on shore, the number of whom were informed (soon after our landing) was three and four hundred; we were eleven in number on two boats. Soon after we landed, four of us went to the troops. After we were with the troops an hour and half, some of the men offered to give firelocks to us, and one in particular gave to Mr. Thomas, our second lieutenant. We saw the enemy's two tenders, one rowgalley, and some rowboats with men and making for the Virginia shore, where they burnt Mr. Brent's houses; first they returned to their ships. Between three and four o'clock in the afternoon we observed their rowgalley and schooner tender making down for the place where our boats lay. The little boat was pulled into the way of their way, and hauled the big boat on which was staved by James Sorrell, by captain's order, before the enemy could come night to fire at us with any certainty. As soon as the rowgalley began to fire, the militia made a retreat, and ran up to the woods; after which the militia went up; then the enemy came and took from off the beach, without having one gun shot, although some of the militia were within 100 yards of the boat when they took her off three huzzas. Further said deponents say and depose as follows.

EDWARD COLES,

CUTHBERT ELLISTON

before me,
RAMSAY, J. P.

after I arrived at Alexandria, my rowgalley was ordered down to watch the motion of the enemy's boats; at my return, to my great surprise, I found a flying advertisement had been stuck up at several places in this town.

ADVERTISEMENT

Alexandria, July 11th, 1776

WHEREAS it appears by certificates now in my possession, under the hands of capt. John H. Lowe, M. Burges, and Mr. Geo. Fraser Hawkins, that

of Maryland, that capt. Robert Conway has propagated a report, much to the dishonour of the 26th battalion of the militia of Maryland, viz. That three or four hundred of the said militia betook themselves to flight, as soon as the ministerial rowgalley began to fire. In order therefore to remove every ill impression made by the said report, I take this method of asserting, that it is a malicious infamous falsehood; as many gentlemen who were present as spectators when capt. Conway says this scene of cowardice was acted, are ready upon oath to testify.

(Signed)

S. HANSON, S. of Sam.

No man, Mr. Printer, conscious of his own integrity, would lay silent under such opprobrious epithets; therefore, in vindication of what I have already asserted, which was altogether to the same effect as the foregoing depositions. I desire you will publish the foregoing narrative, for the truth of which I appeal to every impartial spectator, and remain, Sir,

Your humble servant,

ROBERT CONWAY.

Prince-George's county.

I DO hereby certify to all whom it may concern, that some time last week I fell in company with several people, who were on their way by water to Alexandria. Amongst these there was one Mr. Conway, as I understood, who said he was just from Sandy-Point, where a party of three or four hundred of the Maryland militia was stationed; that as soon as the rowgalley began to fire the said militia all ran; that col. Harrison walked after them laughing at them, and never attempted to rally them; that the only man of spirit amongst them was one Jones, as he described; that the galley landed a parcel of her men and launched one of his boats, carrying her off, after giving three huzzas, without meeting with any opposition. I his conversation and a great deal more passed in the presence of many gentlemen. I would have been more particular, but being very unwell with a bad fever, cannot at this time recollect every particular conversation that passed. Given under my hand this 29th day of July, 1776.

GEO. FRASER HAWKINS.

To all whom it may concern,

(COPY.)

WE, the subscribers, John H. Lowe and John M. Burges, set out on Wednesday last from Mr. Geo. Hawkins's, with some gentlemen, by water, in order to view the situation of the ministerial fleet that was then lying opposite Sandy-Point; and on our way down we met with Mr. Conway, who said he was from Sandy-Point, where a party of three or four hundred of militia were stationed, and at the appearance of a rowgalley, which directed her course to the shore, and on firing, the said militia ran off. He was asked whether the colonel did not endeavour to rally the men; he said no, but walked after them and laughed. He said as the rowgalley approached the shore the colonel addressed his men in the following manner: You that will not fight, give your guns to those that will; on which declaration even-man left the field but himself and one who we suppose to be one Jones. The rowgalley landed a parcel of her men, launched one of his boats, gave three cheers and carried her off, without meeting with any opposition. There were several other matters that he spoke, the particulars of which I do not at present remember, but all attended to the discredit of said militia.

(COPY.)

July 29th, 1776.

The variation between capt. Conway's own narrative (as certified by Mess. Lowe, Burges and Hawkins) and the depositions of his lieutenant and midshipmen, and again the variation in what they depose, must make every impartial reader suspect the truth of them. Capt. Conway asserts, that as soon as the rowgalley began to fire, the said militia (being three or four hundred in number) all ran--That as the rowgalley approached the shore, every man left the field, save two--Mr. lieutenant swears, that only one company, out of the three or four hundred, ran--and Mess. midshipmen swear, that the whole three or four hundred made a precipitate retreat and ran up to the woods; then they swear that some of the militia were within less than 100 yards of the boat when the enemy took her off.

Men, who mean to wound the characters of others in the eyes of the public, by inventing and circulating falsehoods, should be extremely circumspect in what they say or swear--and, as I already observed, the variation and inconsistency in the assertions and depositions of capt. Conway and his party, would make every impartial man suspect their veracity. However, to evince every one that they are founded only in malice and mischief, I have taken the depositions of Mess. Finley, Hunter and Lawraon, of Alexandria, and Mess. Matthews and Stoddart, gentlemen volunteers, which you will also insert, with the certificate under the hands of the rev. Mr. Fendall and Mr. Warren Dent.

Alexandria, the 4th October, 1776.

ON Tuesday the 23d of July last, we, the subscribers, set off from this place with intention to see the enemy's ships, which we were informed were proceeding up Patowmack, and arrived opposite them at Sandy-Point, in Maryland, about half an hour past 6 o'clock in the evening, where we found a body of militia stationed, who informed us there were more men a little lower down the river, to whom we immediately went, and were by them told that col. Harrison, with a detachment of 25 men, was gone down to prevent the enemy's taking off capt. Conway's boats, by means of a gondola and armed schooner, which had left the ships for that purpose, as was conceived. We saw the Roebuck under way turning down, and firing now and then across the field, between the detachment and main body, and heard other great guns, which we supposed were from the gondola and armed schooner. We returned to the main body where we immediately heard a brisk firing of small arms and swivels, which was thought to be an engagement betwixt the detachment and the enemy. We think about sixteen cannon were fired in the whole. The men appeared to be all drawn up ready with their arms, and during the firing seemed in good spirits, and we heard several of them ask if they ought not to go to the assistance of the detachment.

We saw, nor discovered, nothing like cowardice; but on the contrary, a willing spirit seemed generally to prevail.

JOHN FINLEY,
WILLIAM HUNTER,
JAMES LAWRAON.

Sworn before me,

WILLIAM RAMSAY, J. P.

(COPY.)

Charles county, the 18th October, 1776.

WE, the subscribers, joined three companies of the 26th battalion of militia under the command of col. Harrison, at Sandy-Point, on Tuesday the 23d. July last, early in the morning, in the character of volunteers. About 9 o'clock the ships began to man their tenders and small boats, when col. Harrison ordered the three companies to stand to their arms, and after watching the motions of the enemy a few minutes, gave orders for capt. Martin's company, consisting of about 45 men, including officers, to repair to the head of a valley, which led down to the river nearly opposite the Roebuck. We fell in with this company at the head of the valley. A little while after there came three or four strangers, who were questioned by col. Harrison, and informed him that they had come up the river, were going to Alexandria, and had landed a little below in two small boats. These we understood to be capt. Conway, his lieutenant, and two men. By this time ten rowboats, two tenders and a gondola were filed with men along-side of the Roebuck, which lay near 400 yards from the Maryland shore. It was every moment expected the enemy would land and attack us. Col. Harrison told capt. Martin's company that, in case the enemy attempted to land there, he should instantly march down at their head and post them behind the beach; and after admonishing them, begged that if any one felt confused or under any panic, to candidly inform him and turn out of the ranks--on which one of the privates turned out, and told him that he did not like to march down the hill. He was then ordered to give up his gun and ammunition to some other: that would, and col. Harrison delivered his gun to capt. Conway's lieutenant, who said he would march down with us. About ten o'clock the enemy's boats, tenders and gondola, left the Roebuck, giving three cheers, and contrary to our expectation, went over to Virginia, where they landed and set fire to Mr. Brent's houses. Col. Harrison marched the company down to the beach, in order to show them where he intended to post them, had the enemy attempted, or in case they should attempt a landing at that place. Before the enemy returned from Virginia, we were reinforced with about 120 men under col. Hanson. About 6 o'clock afternoon, the enemy's small tender, and the gondola, were observed to be manning, and in a few minutes left the Roebuck and directed their course towards the bay where capt. Conway's boats were landed. Col. Harrison immediately ordered the men to arms, and conceiving the enemy's design was to take off capt. Conway's boats, gave capt. Martin orders to take about 20 of his best armed men, and follow him down to watch the motions of the tender and gondola. His detachment we joined, with two other volunteers--in the whole we think it consisted of 25 persons. We proceeded down towards the bay with all haste, and near the head of a valley met with capt. Conway and some of his men. Capt. Conway went down the valley with col. Harrison to show where his boats lay, and we followed close after in Indian file, and were halted at the mouth of the valley. He told the colonel that one of his boats was drawn over the beach into a marsh, the other was on the shore staved, which was about 20 yards from us, though we could not see her from the mouth of the valley on account of some bushes which grew on the beach. The tender had got in the bay before we reached our post, and lay about 150 yards off. As soon as we were halted, the tender fired one of her carriage guns, which was presently succeeded by a discharge of grape shot from the gondola; this load grounded within a few paces of us, and many of the men, with several cannon balls, were picked up the next day--undry great guns were discharged at us whilst we remained at this post. The gondola, after the came against the boat, rowed off and on, and, after a short time, seemed to be gradually getting more into the bay, as if designing to open the valley and take it. We heard capt. Conway say to col. Harrison, that he thought he was endeavouring to rake the valley, and advised him to order a retreat, or words to the same purpose. The colonel, after taking a view of the gondola, turned about, and in a low tone gave orders for a retreat to the head of the valley, the gondola being within 70 or 80 yards of us at the time. Five or six of the men who were in the rear retreated some distance beyond the place intended, which we firmly believe proceeded from their not having heard the orders distinctly, as most of them returned immediately to the head of the valley, on being called to by some of the officers. From this place we observed the Roebuck had got under way and fallen down, and began to fire on us; also the tender, our situation being open to them both. The colonel returned to the mouth of the valley, and we and others went different ways to take another view of the gondola, which we found lying quite still, nearly opposite the boat, with her hatches close shut, and nothing visible but her oars and guns, though capt. Conway's lieutenant had just before informed, that her hatches were up and men exposed, which raised our hopes of getting a shoot. We recollect that, previous to our leaving the mouth of the valley, capt. Conway asked col. Harrison to let the gondola be fired at, to scare her off from the shore, which was refused, as there was no living object to shoot at. A retreat was then ordered to the main body by col. Harrison, and the detachment directed to scatter as they retreated through the old fields, to observe the flash of the enemy's cannon, and to fall down whenever they saw it. The fire from the Roebuck, armed schooner, and gondola, grew very warm, and the frequent falling down of the men occasioned a general laughter. We retreated to a fence at the edge of a wood, and lay behind it until the enemy's fire ceased--then returned to the main body, with which we remained until the ships went down the river, and the troops were discharged.

JOHN MATTHEWS,
WILLIAM STODDART,

(COPY.)

Charles county, October 18, 1776.
THEN came Messrs. John Matthews and William Stoddart, gentlemen, and made oath on the holy Evangelists of Almighty God, that the above is a true state of the transactions at Sandy-Point, under col. William Harrison; on the 23d of July last.

G. R. BROWN.

Charles county, October 20, 1776.

WHEREAS we find, by sundry depositions published in the Baltimore Gazette, and by certificates under the hands of George Fraser Hawkins, Esq; capt. John H. Lowe, and Mr. John M. Burges, that reports have been fully and industriously propagated, reflecting on the courage, and tending to injure the character of the 26th battalion of Maryland militia, under the command of col. William Harrison. And whereas we think it a duty incumbent on us, and on every man, to rescue injured merit from undervalued reproach, and check any idle reports that may reflect disgrace on the American arms,--we think it but common justice to declare that many of the most injurious assertions, contained in the above-mentioned publication and certificates, are, within our knowledge; totally false, and in every sense groundless. And we do further assert, that we attended the said militia from the Monday of the enemy's arrival at Sandy-Point, until their departure from said place; and that said militia appeared to us to assemble with cheerfulness and alacrity--and we have all the reason in the world to believe, that had the enemy attempted a landing, they would have been warmly and vigorously opposed--for on two different occasions--the one on Monday during a thunder gill, when the men were obliged to take shelter in a small house; the entries gave an alarm, that the enemy were preparing to land, they, so far from exhibiting any symptoms or signs of fear, were on the contrary, in our opinion, too warm and impetuous, by springing out of the house without waiting for orders, and running towards the shore in an irregular manner--the alarm proved groundless; and their two eager behaviour drew from the colonel a gentle reprimand. The other instance happened on the Tuesday morning, when the alarm was given that the enemy were manning their boats and preparing to land, and the general opinion was, and every man expected, that they would attempt a landing at Sandy-Point; on which col. Harrison ordered the men to stand to their arms, and in a very short time after ordered captain Martin's company to the head of a valley, which led down to the shore where it was expected the enemy would land. On this trial (and we do not believe men can be put to a greater or severer one) the men behaved with the most undaunted courage and cool intrepidity. Upon the whole, not only in the above particularized instances, but in the whole of their conduct they appeared spirited, brave, and ready to engage.

HENRY FENDALL,
WARREN DENT.

(COPY.)

Were it necessary, Mr. Printer, a variety of other evidence could be procured to invalidate these idle tales; but I firmly trust, that the testimony now offered will fully satisfy every impartial and well disposed person. I would observe, that the gentlemen who deposed and certify are not of the battalion--three of them residing in Alexandria, Virginia, and can have no farther interest in its character, than as good members of a community. What motive induced capt. Conway and his officers thus to assert, and thus solemnly to depose, I am at a loss to say, unless it was to divert their constituents from an enquiry into their own conduct--for, be it known to the public, that Patowmack river, at Sandy-Point, is near four miles wide, and they, like persons wanting sense, landed their boats, within a small distance of the enemy's ships, on the Maryland shore, when they might have evaded them at least three miles, by passing along the Virginia side--and in case they had been noticed and pursued by the enemy, could at any rate have gone ashore and sued for protection from the opposite militia of Virginia. Had capt. Conway and his officers reported facts as they happened, they must have given the public a favourable opinion of the militia in general at Sandy-Point. A single company, armed and equipped as our militia too generally are, was drawn up, in their presence, ready to advance down to the beach, there to receive the attack of ten rowboats, two tenders, and a gondola, filled with men. On the commanding officer's admitting this company, and begging that if any of them felt confused or afraid, to candidly inform him; one of the company, out of about forty-eight persons, said he did not like to march down the hill, and turned out of the ranks. Whether this be an instance of general cowardice, or not, the impartial public will say. For my part, his refusal by no means surprised me, as the expedition appeared very dangerous, and was really so, though I thought it necessary. We were agreeable to every one's idea, to oppose the landing of at least four times our number, and could we not have repelled them, must have retreated up the hill, exposed to a near fire from the Roebuck, two tenders and a gondola. The retreat of the detachment in the afternoon, which went down to prevent the enemy's taking off capt. Conway's boats, was by my orders--If it was wrong, I am chargeable with it and not the men--However, I thought it prudent, and, in a similar situation, should act again in the same manner. I shall not, to humour capt. Conway or his crew, expose men to the fire of a gondola, when the chance of killing is only on the side of the enemy; but hope ever to be found ready and willing, with those whom I have the honour to command, to risk life whenever any valuable end can be answered.

Before I conclude, I must declare, that, from the trial of the men at Sandy-Point, I entertain the highest opinion of their bravery in general, and were they equipped, as men going into battle should be, would risk my life with them, as soon as with any men in the world. And, as Mr. lieutenant Thomas has, in the course of his deposition, given his opinion of me, I must in return give mine of him--which is, in the sincerity of my heart, this--that he would, at any time, to oblige a person on whom he was the least dependent, wear that black is white, or white black. I am,

Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

WILLIAM HARRISON.