

MARYLAND GAZETTE.

T H U R S D A Y, S E P T E M B E R 28, 1786.

To the D E L E G A T E.

YOUR conduct and character in public life has become the topic of a literary discussion, Eugenius, the friend of his country, would willingly have some account from the Delegate himself of an anonymous publication and letter taken from the Newport Mercury, and republished in the Maryland Gazette or Baltimore Advertiser of June 27, 1783. A short state of facts may not be unnecessary to elucidate this affair.

On the 4th of March 1783, permission was given by the governor and council to Henry Geddis to pass under the sanction of a flag of truce to New-York, with a cargo of flour and corn for the use of the Maryland line, and to return again; a letter accompanied this flag addressed to admiral Digby, expressing a tender feeling for the sufferings of our prisoners, and soliciting the liberty of disposing of the cargo to their use, and Robert Alexander was desired to sell the cargo, pay the contents into the hands of Mr. Luke Wheeler, who was acquainted with the will of the council as to the things he was to purchase and distribute among the prisoners; the flag sailed and was boarded the 17th of March 1783, by a refugee barge off Little Egg Harbour, and on examining the papers the flag was suffered to pass, on the same day also a Rhode-Island privateer boarded and sent her as a prize to Rhode Island. In consequence of this capture, the following anonymous piece was published in the Newport Mercury.

From the Newport Mercury.

Annapolis, (Maryland) March 27.

THE distresses of the American prisoners at New-York have for several years claimed the attention of congress, and the legislatures of the several states. Numbers of these unfortunate people perished, and many were compelled, by the extremity of their sufferings, from hunger, nakedness, and disease, to enter into the service of the enemy. It was not in the power of congress to liberate them from their captivity, or alleviate their wants. The calamity for the last four years was chiefly confined to those of our citizens, who were captured on board of our merchant vessels; a brave and most useful set of men. It being represented to our governor and council, that a number of naval prisoners belonging to this state (many of them the sons and brothers of gentlemen of respectable characters, fortune, and influence) were suffering all the horrors of captivity; on board the prison ship at New-York, they resolved to send, under sanction of flags of truce, a small quantity of corn and flour to that place for sale, to relieve their distresses. It was previously known, that the enemy would receive flags with these articles. On the 12th of this month, a small hoy sloop, with one hundred barrels of flour, and about eight hundred bushels of corn, was sent from this port with a flag, to admiral Digby; and, on the 17th, off Little Egg Harbour, she was boarded under British colours, by a small schooner of six guns belonging to Newport, in the state of Rhode Island, one Oliver Read, commander; who after taking out the mate and four sailors, and several articles belonging to the flag (leaving only captain Geddis, the master, on board) sent her as a prize to Rhode Island, under pretence that this government was trading with the enemy. On the same morning the sloop was boarded by a British large, her papers and cargo examined, and permitted to prosecute her voyage.

There was no other cargo on board but corn and flour for the benefit of our prisoners; and necessary provisions for the people; and no other papers; but the passport and letters from his excellency our governor to admiral Digby, and a gentleman in New-York to sell the cargo, and procure clothing and necessaries for our prisoners. The mate of the flag writes: "That the commander of the privateer (or private) proposed, on the next day after seizing the flag, to let him and the people on board on a Beach Island (near Buzzards Bay) and observed that no inhabitants lived within five or six miles of the main land." It cannot escape notice, that more respect was shown to this government by a refugee barge, than by a vessel of a sister state, under a commission from congress. It is well known, that several of the eastern states have frequently exchanged their prisoners, without any application, or consent of congress; and it is confidently asserted, that they have often sent provisions to New-York, for their support. The above papers acquaint us, that his excellency president Dickinson, informed the assembly of Pennsylvania, that a flag sent by him, a few weeks ago, with flour for the naval prisoners of that state in New-York, had been returned there. If this sovereign and independent republic patiently submits to this disgraceful insult, it will be deservedly repeated. "I public honour is liberty."

As a comment on, and by way of answer to, this anonymous publication, the annexed letter was also published with the above piece from Maryland, with this preface.

The following letter, without any remarks, will sufficiently show that the flags referred to, were upon a trading plan, and that the profits annexed thereto were the only inducement, and not that humane principle of supplying poor prisoners, which the anonymous author of the piece above would wish the world to believe him possessed of.

Annapolis, March 4, 1783.

Dear Sir,

I EXPECT captain Geddis will sail this day in a flag for your city. He will be addressed to Mr. A. who will pay the sales (after deducting the usual commissions and expenses) to you, and you will thereon advance to the prisoners about two hundred pounds (or in the proportion of one hundred barrels of flour, and six hundred and eighty-three bushels of corn, to six hundred and eighty-seven pounds; ten shillings, for two hundred and fifty barrels of flour, and three hundred bushels of corn) and make such use of the residue, after advancing to captain Geddis and paying the wages to his mate and hands, as you please. Captain Bell left this place yesterday to go to Wye River, to take in thirteen hundred and fifty bushels of corn, and I expect he will sail before next Sunday. You will make advances to the prisoners out of his sales (about two hundred and forty pounds) as above. We flatter ourselves that captain Geddis's cargo will leave between eight or nine hundred pounds in your hands, and captain Bell's cargo about eleven hundred pounds, after deductions. Another flag will follow in about ten days. Captain Geddis's sloop is chartered at one hundred pounds for the trip, and eight lay days at New-York, and for demurrage ten shillings per day, and if seized, her value (estimated at five hundred pounds) is to be paid. Captain Bell's schooner is chartered at one shilling per ton per day (or two pounds ten shillings) and her value to be paid, if captured. Under the present prospect of peace, there is no article could be sent to risk either of the vessels or their cargoes. Tobacco is the most profitable, but on peace it will not bear an higher price with you than with us. As corn alone is allowed by the state, and expressed in the flag, nothing else is put in. Unless you are certain from authentic information of the continuation of the war, it will not be advisable to send any thing back in either of the flags, but in no case (I conceive) in Bell's, or the third flag, because of their very high value. If the war should continue, and you determine to venture any goods, captain Geddis's sloop would be no great risk, and if you wait for intelligence from England, you can detain him, as he will lay at so small an expense. I cannot but think if you resolve to send goods, which can only be proper on a certainty of war, you can procure six vessels at a far less price than what must be paid for Bell's schooner, or the third flag, if any accident should happen. If this opinion should meet your approbation, and you determine not to risk the vessels on our account, you will give particular charge to the captain in writing, not to take any thing on board but what is specified in their permits. You cannot be too cautious on this head, or they will risk a vessel worth three or four thousand pounds for one hundred pounds of goods. If you risk the vessel, the captain might put in ventures for himself, but in no other case. If peace should happily take place, it would be very advisable to procure (if to be accomplished) two good ships of about four hundred burghers, one for Bell, and the other for Geddis. You will remember what directions you give, in case you send any goods. No ballast so good as grindstones. Our governor and council permitted captain Cox, to load his flag with corn, and if the war continues, and admiral Digby would grant his passport for goods, I imagine there would be no risk from British cruisers, and there will be very little fear of seizure by ours, or after arrival here. Goods will not justify any risk, unless the war should certainly continue. French goods now sell in Baltimore under cost, and British goods can be purchased with cash as cheap as with you. The first is owing to their inferiority in quality, and the last to the very great and almost incredible scarcity of cash. I am convinced British goods will not sell so cheap six months after peace is declared, as at present. No tobacco can be purchased of the planters; they are out of debt, want few necessaries, and are contented of peace; but some quantity could, in the present state of suspense, be procured of merchants, and the public, with specie; and as low as twenty shillings per hundred.

I wish you would endeavor to procure the letters by the brig Ranger and Speedwell, to Wallace, Johnson, and Mair, and enclose to Mr. Wallace by the first flag coming here, do request this favour if you. I wish you would procure for me, without regard to price, Blackstone's Reports, 4 vols. Burrer's Reports, 4th and 5th vols. and a few papers (or vials if to be got) of Dr.

James's genuine foot powders. I perceive Mr. Rivington advertises Dr. Johnson's works of the English poets, 60 vols. at three shillings and six-pence each; if you can get them at that price for me, I shall be obliged. Also buy of him a calendar for 1783, or 1782; and a cypher seal S. C. and you may procure another for the counting-house. I wish you health and every other happiness in life.

Your affectionate and obedient servant, SAM. CHACE.

Mr. Wheeler.

If this letter be genuine, and to my knowledge its authenticity has never been denied, though published in the Maryland Gazette or Baltimore Advertiser, was a plan laid by the subscriber of it to carry on a trade with the enemy at New-York during the war, and in contradiction to a positive act of assembly. Out of the supplies sent by the council to the confined officers, who at that time were suffering all the rigours of a gloomy prison and pinching poverty, were two thousand pounds to have been converted to the purposes of trade and will of the person to whom the letter was addressed; it will remain with the subscriber to the letter to reconcile the contents with the contract entered into by Mr. Chace and the council of Maryland, which Eugenius understands is to be published in the Maryland Gazette of this day. If the contract has not been complied with, honour and integrity will hardly acquit the writer of the letter, unless, among the novelties of the day, an opinion should be urged, that a man may act dishonourably on virtuous principles.

EUGENIUS.

Mr. GREEN,

HAVING seen the copy of a letter said to be wrote by Mr. Chace, in March 1783, to his correspondent in New-York, which letter refers to flags granted by the then governor and council, and on which letter a writer observes, "that they were granted on a trading plan, and not on the humane principle of supplying poor prisoners." I request you to publish the following contracts of the said governor and council with Messieurs Chace, Dorsey, and Co. and their letters to admiral Digby and Mr. Robert Alexander on that subject, which, I trust, will show that the imputation of the said writer is an IMPUDENT FALSEHOOD.

Your humble servant,

A. B.

Annapolis, September 25, 1786.

In COUNCIL, 21st January 1783.

Present, His Excellency William Paca, Esquire,
Benjamin Stoddert,
Gabriel Duval,
The honourable } Jeremiah T. Chace,
James Brice,
John H. Stone.

Memorandum of an agreement made this 21st day of January, one thousand seven hundred and eighty-three, between the governor and council of the state of Maryland, and Dorsey, Wheeler, and company, which said company consists of John Dorsey, Thomas Dorsey, Samuel Chace, and Luke Wheeler.

WHEREAS it is represented to the governor and council, that there are about one hundred and fifty citizens of this state prisoners in New-York, suffering extreme poverty and distress from their confinement and captivity, and the said governor and council being disposed to relieve them as far as possible from their present distresses and sufferings,

It is therefore covenanted and agreed, that permission and flag or flags be given to the said Dorsey, Wheeler, and company, to export to New-York four hundred and fifty barrels of flour, and the said Dorsey and company covenant and agree to purchase at their own expense, and ship for New-York, the said four hundred and fifty barrels of flour, and on arrival of their vessel at New-York to apply for permission to sell and dispose of the same, and with the monies arising from the sale, to cloath the said prisoners as comfortably as an advance in cloathing to each of them to the amount of three pounds five shillings specie, will enable them to do it by a purchase there of cloaths; and they further covenant, that if the money expended for such cloaths to such amount to each prisoner as aforesaid, belonging as aforesaid to this state, shall fall short of the sum of four hundred and eighty-seven pounds ten shillings, that the balance shall be immediately paid into the hands of the governor and council on return of the said flag, or within such time as the flag might return back to the port of Annapolis; and they further covenant to take all proper measures to procure an exchange of the said prisoners, or a release on parole; and that they will transport to this state all