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Title: Letter from John Dickinson to Charles Lee

Date: July 25, 1776

Location: MC 2001.13, B1, F1

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My dear General,

I receive with Pleasure every Mark
of your Friendship, and none with more, than when
You freely communicate to me your Disapprobation
of any part of my Conduct. As long as You give
me that proof of a sincere Esteem for me, so long I
shall most affectionately love You; and so highly do
I value your Esteem, that if my Practices did not
furnish sufficient Opportunities to evidence your
Esteem in that Manner, I should be almost tempted
voluntarily to err, that I might receive repeated
Testimonies of so agreeable a Truth. I entertain
as much Veneration for your Abilities and Integrity, as it
is possible for Man to do; and yet, for my soul, I cannot

agree with you, that a Declaration of Independence
at this time, will promote the Happiness of my
Country. I have tried, I have toiled to thrust the Belief of the Proposition
into my Mind. I have represented to Myself, that you, & several
other good & sensible Men think it as clear as any axiom
in Euclid — that my Reputation, at least my Popularity
must inevitably be sacrificed by my obstinate Perseverance —
yet, I have so much of the Spirit of Martyrdom in Me,
that I have been ^{conscientiously} compelled, in my political Capacity,
to endure the Nuisance of
Persecution, rather than resign my impious
Persuasion. To add to my Comfort, this Reflection occurs,
when I consider the Weight that is due to the Sentiments
of some of those who differ from Me in ^{opinion} judgment, that
perhaps I am suffering for a most absolute Validity —
However, while I think as I do, the Validity is in Me, and I
dread nothing ^{more than} ~~as an~~ offering Violence to my Integrity.
"Mea Me Virtute involvo" — and I am sure, this Virtue ought to be

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to the Southward so effectually & quickly, that I may the
Measure of serving under you this summer. Lord Howe
and his Brother are now on Staten Island - Their Quarters
are about five or six Miles from this Place: at least the
Generals are. Their advanced Post, about half a mile from
ours - the Sound between - Our Militia to the number of
~~about~~ 22 hundred stationed along it - Gen^l Mercer commands
we are to be reinforced - and are preparing Boats to
make a descent on the Island, all over which the Indians
are spread - their numbers said to be between 8 & 10 thousand
a Smash upon them, before the rest of the Fleet arrives,
may render their Efforts, as at New York, less effectual.
I wish you were here to direct our Operations, in this affair -
as far as I can judge, a good Deal of Generalship will be
necessary for giving success to the Measure - the Country
Island being much intersected by Streams, & Morasses,
beside, the Sound that furrows it, in the narrowest places,
twenty fathoms broad - May Heaven bless you, my dear
Sir, in the sincere Prayer of your ever affectionate
Elizabeth Down in Jersey
July 25th 1776

Wm Dickinson

[Elizabethtown, New Jersey, July 25, 1776]

My dear General,

I receive with Pleasure every Mark of your Friendship, and none with more, than when You freely communicate to me your Disapprobation of any part of my Conduct. As long as You give me that proof of a sincere Esteem for me, so long I shall most affectionately love You; and so highly do I value your Esteem, that if my Frailties did not furnish sufficient opportunities to evidence your Esteem in that manner, I should be almost tempted voluntarily to err, that I might receive repeated testimonies of so agreeable a Truth.

I entertain as much Veneration for your Abilities and Integrity, as it is possible for Man to do; and yet, for my Soul, I cannot

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agree with You, that a Declaration of Independence at this time will promote the Happiness of my Country. I have tried, I have toiled to thrust the Belief of the Proposition into my Mind. I have represented to Myself, that You, & several other good & sensible Men think it as clear as any axiom in Euclid --- that my Reputation, at least my Popularity, must inevitably be sacrificed by my obstinate heresy --- yet, I have so much of the Spirit of Martyrdom in Me, that I have been conscientiously compelled to endure in my political Capacity the Fires & Faggots of Persecution, rather than resign my impious Persuasion. To add to my Comfort, this Reflection occurs, when I consider the weight that is due to the Sentiments of some of those who differ from Me in ~~sentiment~~ opinion: that perhaps I am suffering for a most absolute Falsity --

However, while I think as I do, the Falsity is sacred to me, and I dread nothing ~~as much as~~ more than offering Violence to my Integrity. "Mea Me Virtute involvo" --- and I am sure, this Virtue ought to be

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a very warm thick Cloak, for I am a Witness, that it brings [*word started, expunged*] many Storms and hard Blows upon us poor mortals.

Among the rest, and here, my dear Friend, I am serious --- it has deprived me of the little power I once possest, that now might be exerted ~~for~~ in your Service. Our Convention, since I have been in this Place with my Battalion, have left me out of the new Delegation. But Your Right to obtain from Congress the satisfaction You mention, is so manifest, that I have not the least Doubt, but that they will immediately order the Money to be paid. I have wrote on the subject to a particular Friend of mine, who is a Delegate and a man of Abilities, which I am convinced he will exert in your Cause. I most heartily wish You success in that Business, and in every other that can give You pleasure. I congratulate You on the success in Carolina. Do crush the Enemies of Liberty

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to the Southward so effectually & quickly that I may [*have*] the Pleasure of serving under You this summer. Lord Howe and his Brother are now on Staten Island --- Their quarters are about five or six Miles from this Place: at least the Generals are. Their advanced Forts about half a mile from ours --- the Sound between Our Militia to the Number of ~~Twenty~~ 22 hundred stationed along it.

Genl. Mercer commands. We are to be reinforced-and are preparing Boats etc. to make a Descent on the Island, all over which the Enemies are spread --- their Numbers said to be between 8 & 10 thousand. A smash upon them, before the rest of the Fleet arrives, may render their efforts against New York less effectual. I wish You were here to direct our Operations in this affair

As far as I can judge, a good Deal of Generalship, will be necessary for giving success to the Measure the ~~Country~~ Island being much intersected by Streams, and, Morasses besides the Sound that surrounds it, in the narrowest places, twenty perches broad

May Heaven bless You, my dear Sir, is the sincere Prayer of Your ever affectionate

John Dickinson

Elizabeth Town in Jersey
July 25th 1776