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Title: Letter from William Bingham to Thomas Fitzsimons

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London Novem^r 29th 1783

Dear Sir

I have to acknowledge Receipt of your favor of the 3^o Oct^r. I find that you are surprized at my Representation of the favorable Disposition of the Commercial Interests of this Country towards the United States. It still exists, tho' much more feebly, than when I then wrote to you; - I find you cannot reconcile it with the restraining Proclamation, that reached you some Time before -

This obvious Act of Government was only intended as an internal Regulation of the Commerce of British Shipping, altho' it virtually prohibited an Intercourse wth American Vessels, between the States of the West India Possessions. However, ministerial People begin to assert, that this Permission is only to be obtained by Treaty, & that it would ill accord with the Dignity of Great Britain, to make Concessions that are not officially sought after or required.

They seem at present more desirous of opening the Negotiation, & Sollicitous to know the Cause of the Delay.

Lord Sheffield's Pamphlet, which doubtless has long since reached you, has had a surprizing Influence on the public Mind, in regard to a Commercial Connection with America;

I remain
Your Friend

Finding no Answer has been given to it, of how necessary it is to counteract its pernicious Effects by shewing the Fallacy of his Reasoning, I have prepared an Answer in a Hurry, which I have committed to the Press, & will be published in a few Days; - I shall send you a Copy of it by the next Opportunity -

The United States stand on high Ground. If they act with Energy & Firmness, they must make their Commerce & Connection courted by all Europe -

I observe what you say in regard to the present Ministers being permitted to resign as they have desired; - I agree with you that their Appointments are far too expensive, considering the Situation of the United States -

From the Result of Observations I have made, I think it will be necessary to have Persons at the Courts of Versailles, St James's, & the Hague, in a ministerial Capacity, as the Commercial Connection we shall have with their States will often require an Interference of a public Character, - who, at the same Time, will be always ready to watch over the Interests of the United States, & turn every Opportunity that may offer of improving them, to proper Account -

We have certainly Nothing to do with the Politics of Europe, but as they are connected with Commerce, the Union of which must hereafter constitute the leading Object of the Statesman's Attention -

You mention that a Profit is not my View, you are of opinion a respectable Character may be obtained, to last as long as my other Pursuits incline me to remain in England -

My Object is not certainly Profit; - Besides, the Exercise of no Appointment under Congress, would at all increase the Expence of my

present

present State of living

If therefore Congress should think proper to appoint me as their Minister here, for the purpose of forming any necessary Arrangements as the Basis of future Intercourse between the two Countries, I will make my Term of Residence here, Subservient to my Views of rendering them Services, & on the most disinterested Principles.

It would look too much like Parade, to have it generally made known, that I have made such Offers; —

I assure you they proceed from a Conviction, that it is in my Power to serve my Country, from having some practical Knowledge of its Commercial Interests, which you must be sensible is essentially necessary in forming Arrangements for its Commercial Connection.

I therefore commit to your Discretion & Delicacy, the Use you will make of my Offer.

I had with a great Deal of Perseverance brought our East India Business to a Point, that ensured its Success; — when unexpectedly, ministerial Interference in their Affairs, has rendered all my Trouble unavailing.

The Organization of that Company was extremely defective, being deprived of coercive Power to carry their Resolutions & Instructions into proper Execution; — From this Circumstance, their servants in India continually disobeyed their Orders, & obtained Protection & support from the Influence that a proper Application of the Fortunate, they had amassed in India amongst the Proprietors, generally created.

This Affair at last became desperate, & the Wars their servants had provoked for the purpose

of showing

Sharing in the Plunder of the Enemy, had from the
exhaustive Expences that attended them, exhausted all
their Resources; — They were at last reduced
to a state little short of Bankruptcy; — Their Stock
from 290 (which it had once reached) had fallen
to 120 — They were under the necessity of applying
for Succor & Assistance. — Their Situation
required a prompt Remedy; & the Nation loudly
called for parliamentary Interposition —

No better Opportunity could offer for a
bold & enterprising Minister to increase the
Influence of the Crown, & consequently secure a
Permanency in his Place —

A Bill was therefore introduced into
the House of Commons, disfranchising the Company
by annulling their Charter; — by abolishing the
Court of Directors, & vesting all their Concerns of
War, Revenue, & Commerce, in the Hands of
Seven Commissioners, & eight Subordinate
Directors, appointed by Parliament —

This Violation of public Honor — this
Encroachment on the rights of the Subject, secured
under the Sanction of parliamentary Faith,
was opposed by Petitions from all Quarters — but
all was vain — A corrupt Majority have
voted in favor of the Bill, & it will doubtless pass —

Altho' this Change of System has rendered
my former Application negatory, yet I think
the ~~more~~ projected Establishment much more
favorable to our Views, than the present one, as
the

as the former will have much greater Power,
- I shall therefore renew the Business, as soon
as the Arrangement is formed, & have little
Doubt of Succeeding.


I mean to send me by the first Opportunity
this, a List of the different Kinds of Articles that
should compose a Cargo for the American
Market, the Proportions of each, & the Quantities
that the Consumption of the Country would absorb;
with every necessary Information on this Subject,
This has been particularly requested of me.

I am much indebted to you for your Intention
of serving Gilmer's Establishment - I am confident
you will find him a very active, capable, & intelli-
gent Correspondent. - I am fearfull that the
Death of our worthy Friend will be a severe Blow
to the Concerned.

I congratulate you on your Appointment
as Consul for the City, which involves in it Duties of
the most serious Nature, as tending towards the
future Happiness & Prosperity of our State.

If you can propose any Business that
has a Prospect of being advantageous, I will readily
join you in it.

I am with Sincere Regard

Yours obed^t & affec^t
Wm Bingham


London ¹⁷⁸³ Nov. 20.

William Bingham

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Philadelphia