

George Washington to John A. Washington, March 25, 1775, The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799. John C. Fitzpatrick, Editor.

***To JOHN AUGUSTINE WASHINGTON**

Richmond, March 25, 1775.

Dear Brother: Mr. Smith deliverd me your Letter of the 16th., but as one is generally in a hurry and bustle in such places, and at such times as these I have only time to acknowledge it, and add that it would have given me pleasure to have met you here. I shall refer you to Mr. Smith for an Acct. of our proceedings up to this day, and you cannot fail of learning the rest from the Squire, who delights in the Minutiæ of a Tale. I am in doubt whether we shall finish here this week, but as I shall delay little time on the Road in returning, I shall hope to see you on your way up, or down, from Berkeley. I am much obliged to you for the Holly Berries and Cotton Seed. My Love to my Sister and the Children. I had like to have forgot to express my entire approbation of the laudable pursuit you are engaged in of Training an Independant Company. I have promised to review the Independant Company of Richmond¹ sometime this Summer, they having made me a tender of the Command of it at the sametime I could review yours and shall very cheerfully accept the honr. of Commanding it if occasion requires it to be drawn out, as it is my full intention to devote my Life and Fortune in the cause we are engagd in, if need be, I remain Dr. Sir, Yr. most affect. Brother

¹In March 17 the independent company of Richmond County, Va., unanimously chose Washington its commander. The original notification is in the Washington Papers. He had already been chosen to command the Prince William independent company, and later was chosen to command the Fairfax, Albemarle, and Spotsylvania companies. John Augustine Washington's letter announcing that the Westmoreland company

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had acted in like manner is not in the Washington Papers. 1n March 20 the convention assembled“ in the old church in the town of Richmond.” 1ne of its first acts after organization was to approve the proceedings of the “American Continental Congress,” and to consider “this whole continent as under the highest obligations to that very respectable body, for the wisdom of their counsels, and their unremitted endeavors to maintain and preserve inviolable, the just rights and liberties of his Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects in America.” Thanks were returned to the delegates by name. (See Force's American Archives, Fourth Series, vol. 2, pp. 163, 164.) 1n March 23 Patrick Henry introduced resolutions looking to the arming of the colony. The convention resolved “that a well regulated militia, composed of gentlemen and yeomen, is the natural strength and only security of a free government; that such a militia in this colony would forever render it unnecessary for the mother country to keep among us, for the purpose of our defence, any standing army of mercenary forces, always subversive of the quiet, and dangerous to the liberties, of the people, and would obviate the pretext of taxing us for their support.” (See Force's American Archives, Fourth Series, vol. 2, 168, 169.) Some of the warmest patriots in the convention, writes Wirt, opposed these resolutions. Richard Bland, Benamin Harrison, Edmund Pendleton, and Robert C. Nicholas “resisted them with all their influence and abilities.” He gives, on the authority of Edmund Randolph, what purports to be Henry's speech in favor of his resolutions; but the researches of Mr. Moncure D. Conway enable us to give what Randolph himself wrote: “After a few seconds Richard Henry Lee fanned and refreshed with a gale of pleasure; but the vessel of the revolution was still under the impulse of the tempest which Henry had created. Artificial oratory fell in copious streams from the mouth of Lee, and rules of persuasion accomplished every thing which rules could effect. If elegance had been personified, the person of Lee would have been chosen. But Henry trampled upon rules, and yet triumphed, at this time perhaps beyond his own expectation. Jefferson was not silent. He argued closely, profoundly, and warmly on the same side. The post in the revolutionary debate belonging to him, was that at which the theories of republicanism were deposited. Washington was prominent, though silent. His books bespoke a mind absorbed in meditation on his country's fate; but a positive concert between him and Henry could not more effectually have exhibited him to view, than when Henry ridiculed the idea of peace ‘when there was no peace,’ and enlarged on the duty of preparing for war.” (See Conway's Biography of Edmund Randolph, p. 382.) 1n the same day (March 25) Washington was appointed on a committee“ to prepare a plan for the encouragement of arts and manufactures in this colony.” “That this colony be immediately put into a posture of defence, and that Mr. Henry, Mr. Lee, Mr. Treasurer, Mr. Harrison, Mr. Lemuel Riddick, Mr. Washington, Mr. Stevens, Mr. Andrew Lewis, Mr. Christian, Mr. Pendleton, Mr. Jefferson, and Mr. Zane be a committee to prepare a plan for the embodying, arming, and discipling, such a number of men as may be sufficient for that purpose.” A report was made on the following day and is printed in the Virginia Gazette of Mar. 30, 1775. The Delegates to the Continental Congress were also elected. George Mason was taking an active part in the political events of this time, but he appears to have made Washington the instrument for carrying his ideas into practice. He submitted, in February, a plan for establishing a militia and made the judicious suggestion that the old burgesses should be chosen as delegates to attend the convention at Richmond, rightly believing that such a step would carry more weight with the people than the selection of new men. (See Force's American Archives, Fourth Series, vol. 1, 1145.)