

Theme 3 – Sir Henry Clinton and the War for America, 1774-1783

Transcripts for manuscript items

Where the commentary refers to only sections of letters, these passages are shown in red.

Contents

- o Me C 28/2 - Letter from Sir Henry Clinton, Boston, to Charles Mellish; c. 24 Jun. 1775
- o Me C 28/2 - Letter from Sir Henry Clinton, New York, to Charles Mellish; 25 Sep. 1776
- o Me C 29/17 - Letter from Dr. John Macnamara Hayes, Hubbarton, to Charles Mellish; 13 Jul. 1777
- o Ne C 2344 - Letter from Sir Henry Clinton to H.F.C. Pelham-Clinton, 2nd Duke of Newcastle under Lyne; 13 Oct. n.y. [1777]
- o Ne C 2645 - Letter from General Sir Henry Clinton, New York [U.S.A.], to H.F.C. Pelham-Clinton, 2nd Duke of Newcastle under Lyne; 11 Jul. 1778
- o Ne C 2606 - Letter from General Sir Henry Clinton, to H.F.C. Pelham-Clinton, 2nd Duke of Newcastle under Lyne; 3 July 1779
- o Ne C 2640 - Letter from Sir H. Clinton, New York [U.S.A.], to H.F.C. Pelham-Clinton, 2nd Duke of Newcastle under Lyne; 19 Nov. 1779
- o Ne C 2292 - Letter from Sir Henry Clinton, to H.F.C. Pelham-Clinton, 2nd Duke of Newcastle under Lyne; 17, 20 & 23 Sep. 1781
- o Ne C 2309 - Letter from C. Cornwallis, 2nd Earl Cornwallis, Yorktown [U.S.A.], to Sir Henry Clinton; 11 Oct. 1781
- o Ne C 2311/1 - Copy letter from C. Cornwallis, 2nd Earl Cornwallis, Yorktown, to Sir H. Clinton; 15 Oct. 1781
- o Ne C 2290 - Copy letter from Sir H. Clinton, H.M.S. 'London' off Chesapeake Bay [U.S.A.], to G.S. Germain, 1st Viscount Sackville; 29 Oct. 1781

Document 1

Me C 28/2 - Letter from Sir Henry Clinton, Boston, to Charles Mellish; c. 24 Jun. 1775

[n.d. - circa 24 June 1775]

My Dear Carlos,

I cannot let the Cerebus sail without giving you a line by it; and at the same time a short account of the action of the 17th. The Rebels on that day took possession of some high ground, from hence they had it in their power to give serious anoyance to the town and shiping; it was necessary to dislodge them before they were too strongly entrenched. G. Howe accordingly embarked with 2000 men for that purpose, found them strongly posted, having on their right a redoubt, & the town of Charles town; on their left a bay, and in their front a breast work. Our left, entre nous exposed to so much fire front and flank, was greatly disordered. I saw it & dreaded [p.2] the consiquence, thought I might be of use, passed the river, assembled the debris of the left, & what other troops I could get, and marched to the assistance of my friend. I found that the enemy was quitting his intrenchment and was retiring; took with his approbation my friend Howe's avant garde to finish whatever

remained to be done, followed in expectation of meeting with a second redoubt which we had half finished a month before but the stockaders had done nothing to it, on the contrary had left it in the only state in which it could annoy them. Our troops got possession, but still were exposed to the fire from some houses which the enemy still kept possession of. I sent for some canons & Housting[?] but being wooden houses they suffered very little. I thus proposed to go and burn them with the light infantry, thinking it best to finish the affair, so feared the enemy seeing their troops in possession of these houses [p.3] might be tempted to muster in them, which considering how much we had suffered might not be so convenient. It was objected that we might lose men by doing it, wish we did not lose more by not doing it, as they picked our people off even on their bellies in the breastwork. However being a mere volunteer there I could only advise & I believe they at one time wished they had followed it. For just as I had proficied so it happen[ed], they appeared in a great body seemingly intending to attack us again. We showed however good countenance, and with the assistance of our 12 pound shot which fell among them the business finished, & I after receiving the warmest thanks of my friend, returned to Boston, as it was to be my turn next. It accordingly came a few days after but the enemy learning of our intentions, and appearing in great force it was thought prudent to desist. Our second embarkation will be here in all probability in a day or two. Little did I think my good friend that [p.4] the operations of war would or had commenced before my arrival. - So it was. We are told the Southern Provinces will not go into rebellion. Why don't you buy them at any rate, & if you must have war send over 2,000 [*sic. ? writer's error for 20,000*] at once. You know how much I wished for peace how desirous I was to do everything to preserve it. What romantick notions I had even if pushed to extremity to try everything before blood was drawn, but alas all that was at an end before we arrived & I am convinced that nothing but independency will satisfy these people. My cypher is so slow I cannot ever know. Adio my good friend let me hear from you: my estates etc. are too flourishing away. But patience we shall see better times, I hope.

After the action the other night I returned rather late over the field of battle, the crys and groans of the dying was shocking. I had conversation with many of these poor wretches in their dying moments. Most of them declared they had been deceived, but they were determined to measure us once & should then be satisfied. They are now entrenching up to their Chins but a fresh army relieves them every week. Our loss has been very great ... [letter incomplete]

Document 2

Me C 28/2 - Letter from Sir Henry Clinton, New York, to Charles Mellish; 25 Sep. 1776

Dear Charles,

In my last I gave you the particulars of our operations while on Long Island; I told you that we found them in an Entrenched Camp Covering works which they had constructed with great labour, & which they seemed resolved to defend with great spirit. They thought themselves inattackable in front, and on their right they were strong but the defence of the gorges in the mountains which covered their left lay at a great distance. Once in possession of them [p.2] in my opinion it came to a short alternative, run away or stay and be beat. My advice therefore was to give them every Jealousy for their

right, not a Squint towards their left till everything was ready and then by a nights march prevant them at the gorge on their left. This with a combined attack on other parts I recommended and I believe I was lucky enough to have our chief agree with me in opinion for the plan was adopted nearly as I wished. I had the command of the Avant garde, after a detour of many miles we arrived at daybrake at the pass, secured it, and advanced against their left. This unexpected attack threw them into confusion [p.3], they broke, and as we had possession of their direct Communication with their works their left was thrown back upon their right, and both reduced to a sauve qui peut, over bays, marshes, creeks etc., in short had all answered as we wished not a man could have escaped. As it was a most compleat surprize & derout, above 5000 killed wounded and taken besides the missing & not much loss on our side except that of two or three good officers, but I am forgetting I have already given you the account. I have now to add to it our landing on this Island on the 15th of this month, which to my great astonishment was effected without loss. We have possession of the City & greatest part of the Island, the Rebels hold the other part which they have fortified & [p.4]mean to defend, a secret may possibly be found to remove them from that likewise & to brake their unweildy machine. Whether it will reassemble again I cannot say. There seems to appear a determined resolution to support Independancy.

1.22.7 1.75 13.5.2. 13.31.11. 31.9.7. 19.25.7. 23.29.12
23.29.13. last February when I was in N. York. I must refer you to our friend in Cork street for a further explanation. faithfully

Your h[umb]l[e] s[ervan]t
H. Clinton

Sept[ember] 25th

Document 3

Me C 29/17 - Letter from Dr. John Macnamara Hayes, Hubbarton, to Charles Mellish; 13 Jul. 1777

Dear Sir,

Since my last, the Army under the Command of Gen[era]l Burgoyne advanced from St. Johns on Lake Champlain. At at [sic] the River Bocquet the whole rendevouzd, the 24th ult. where every disposition for the ensuing campaign was made, and proclamations from the Gen'l. pasted on some houses offering protection to the Inhabitants if they remained quiet at their Houses, and Pardon to those of the Rebels who claim'd the Kings Mercy and laid down their Arms. The 27th the army advanced from Bocquet to Crown Point (ab't. 10 leagues) where the Gren's. & Light Infantry were encamp'd, and our shipping at anchor. The first of July the Army moved from thence towards Ticondoroga & halted at three Miles distance, where we beheld the Rebels in their Works at Ticondoroga & Mount Independant, a very high Hill w[hi]ch commands the former, and which they [had] cleared & fortified [p.2] this Spring. Our Gren[adier]s & Light Infantry with some Savages and Canadians got at the other side of Ticon. the 2d where the later had a skermish with a party of the Rebels in which they were routed and our people got possession of a Mill, some Houses and the River, which intercepted any Retreat or Communication by Lake George. The Rebels were well aware of this and therefore to secure themselves a Retreat built a Bridge of Communication between Ticon. & Mount Independant, and also to prevent our shipping from passing by South Bay or Lake George. The Advanced Corps with the first & second British Brigades posted themselves a little above Ticon. within cannon shot, while the

Germans were getting towards Independant & endeavouring to get round it to prevent a Retreat by South Bay, but while our people were employ'd in making Roads thro' the Woods for our Cannon, & the Advanced Corps in possession of a very High hill w[hi]ch we call'd Sugar loaf'd, and commanded both Ticon. & Independant the Rebels were struck into such confusion, that after firing a few Cannon shot, they retreated by South Bay Bay, leaving all their heavy Baggage, Cannon, [p.3] Intrenching Tools of all sorts, Powder & Provisions behind them the 6th Inst. about 4 o'C a.m. The advanced Corps with the Germans immediately pursued the Rebels by Land while Gen'l. Burgoyne with the shipping, Gun Boats & first and second Brigade pursued by Water, forced a part of the Bridge, and advanced towards Skeensborough where the Rebels were fortified, had some Galleys & Schooners who attacked our Gun Boats, but upon the Approach of the shipping, one or two struck, one blown up and all their Boats & Baggage taken. They had large stores of every Necessary at Skeensborough which which [sic] they set fire to and then got off. It is said for certain, there was 15,000 stand of Arms &c. consumed at the stores with every other Necessary. Our people are encamped at Skeensborough - but to return to the advanced Corps at Skeensborough under the Command of Brig[adie]r Gen[era]l Fraser, he pursued a party of the Rebels the 6th and the 7th in the Morn[in]g, came up with a Body of them ab[ou]t 2,000 who were in Ambush, or as I suppose it, preparing to set off, as they were putting on their Napsacks &c., but upon two Companies shewing themselves, they soon betook themselves to their Breastworks, which is a Mode [p.4] of the defence they have adopted, and as our people eager to be at them, they immediately fired & every shot took effect; the Remainder of our people pushed, a smart Engagement ensued, when the Rebels were drove from their breastworks, many killed among whom was their Brigadier Gen[era]l Francis, Numbers Wounded, 300 taken prisoners, and the Remainder drove into the Woods, where they ran with the greatest precipitancy to save their lives. The Numbers of their killed we cannot ascertain but they are computed about 200. As to ours we have greatly suffered from their first fire, about 30 privates killed, 3 Officers, Major Grant 24th, L[ieutenant] Douglas 29[th], & L[ieutenant] Haggarth of the Marines; 12 Officers Wounded among whom are Major Ackland & Lord Ballcarries, but slightly, and the others badly but likely to recover; 120 privates, one German Off[ice]r and 12 of his Men. It happen'd in the most unfortunate place in the World as assistance by either land or water co[ul]d not be procured less than 25 Miles and that no Cart Road. I was sent for & arrived the 8th in the Morn[in]g after travelling five & twenty Miles thro' a Wood without a Guide, and here remain with the Wounded to give them every assistance in my power ... [letter incomplete]

Document 4

Ne C 2344 - Letter from Sir Henry Clinton to H.F.C. Pelham-Clinton, 2nd Duke of Newcastle under Lyne; 13 Oct. n.y. [1777]

Oct. 13th [1777]

You will have heard probably, before this meets you, that my attempts upon Fort Montgomery, Clinton &c, & all their posts in the highlands have succeeded beyond my utmost hope. The communication with Albany is now open, but I fear Burgoyne is not there to avail himself of it. I inclose you a copy of a letter from the Rebel Governor of this State: I have the original, taken from among his papers: by it you will see the consequence of the little stroke I have had the good fortune to strike. I likewise send you the letters,

that passed between Burgoyne & me, before I attempted it. In all my letters, wrote in Cypher, to General Burgoyne, I describe the defensive state I have been left in; how little it is in my [p.2] power to give him the smallest assistance. On the 12th of September I sent a messenger to him with three lines in Cypher; "You know my poverty, but if with 2000 men which are all I can spare from this important post, I can do anything to facilitate your operations, I will make an attack upon Fort Montgomery if you will let me know your wishes." On the 30th of September I received his answer in the following words by the same messenger; "I have lost the old cypher, but from the tenor of your letter, I thought you would have it to read. An attack or even the menace of an attack upon Fort Montgomery will be of use. It will stir them from before me, & I will follow them close." In a second letter of the same date he says, "that, should I not be able to carry Montgomery, the keeping it [p.3] it besieged will help: should Gates detach to support Putnam & I conceive he cannot be supported elsewhere, depend upon me to follow him: lose no time." The first of these letters I received, as I said before, on the 30th of September. On the second of October I began my march, as it was necessary to give jealously elsewhere, & on the 6th I made my stroke near 60 miles up the river. On the night of the 5th a messenger, being a confidential officer from General Burgoyne came to me and told me his situation; "that he had lost his communications with Canada, that he had provisions till the 20th": he described the situation of his own army, "that he was in a very strong post, that, though the rebels were strongly posted likewise, he made no doubt of being able to force them [p.4] them, & of getting to Albany, but doubted whether he could subsist there, as the country was drained; & that therefore he could not think of going thither unless I could open a communication with it, could name the day, on which I could be there, & being there would answer for keeping the communication open with New York": he further desired him to tell me "that he waited for my orders, whether he should attack the Rebels, or retire across the lakes, while they were clear from ice; that, if he did not hear from me by the 12th, he should retire". Thinking I should fulfill all that could be expected, & his utmost wish, by even a menace against Fort Montgomery, I was much astonished to find that he now expected me with 1000 men (what I could spare [p.5] after guarding the post I had taken, & others on my communication with New York) to penetrate to Albany, which with 7000 men he had not been able to effect; & not only to penetrate, but to keep; & that I should give him orders how to act. My answer by the same Messenger was as follows: "Not having received any instructions from Sir W. Howe, relative to the operations of the Northern army, ignorant of the General's intentions respecting it (except his wish that it should get to Albany) I could not presume to give orders; but if, in consequence of my unexpected success, as the river was now open between us, he should have decided to attack the Rebel army, & could get to [p.6] Albany, I would do my utmost to communicate with him, & give him a supply of provisions." In my situation, not having heard from Gen[era]l Howe for six weeks, not knowing where Washington was, having left a small force in New York, with a communication of 140 miles between Albany & New York to open & keep, & the important post we had taken, to garrison, it was rather too greatly daring to attempt it, but I determined to venture 1700 men under Gen[era]l Vaughan, to proceed up the river, under convoy of S[i]r James Wallace & the gallies, & if possible, to assist his operations. I had likewise ready, in small vessels, such as could go within a few miles of Albany, provisions sufficient to supply Gen[era]l Burgoyne's arms for six months: all this [p.7] this I had done, when I received a letter from the Commander in chief, acquainting me, "that his victories had been by no means decisive; & that notwithstanding I may have gone up the river, (which I told him I proposed doing) if my object was not of the greatest importance, with a

probability of fulfilling it in a few days, I was to give it up & send him full 4000 men", which I am now doing -
- Good God! what a fair prospect blasted! If Burgoyne has retreated, as he seemed under no apprehension of difficulties in his retreat, I dread none; but I wish, if he is gone, to hear that he is safe over the lakes, having left a garrison in Ticonderoga.

Document 5

Ne C 2645 - Letter from General Sir Henry Clinton, New York [U.S.A.], to H.F.C. Pelham-Clinton, 2nd Duke of Newcastle under Lyne; 11 Jul. 1778

New York, July 11th [1778]

My Dear Lord,

In my last from Philadelphia I told your Grace that I was ordered to evacuate that place and proceed to N. [New] York where we arrived on the 2d ins[tan]t, every obstruction and some opposition met us on the way but nothing of consequence till the 28th of June when Mr. W. with his whole Army to which was added all the militia of the neighbouring provinces pressed hard on my rear. I will do him the justice to say it was well timed, my baggage provision [p.2] train &c. &c and the division of the Army which convoyed them extended 12 miles at the time he began his attack upon my rear guard. It was necessary to meet him with what I had. I had two inducements, to give time to my baggage to get into safety, and the hopes of meeting his whole army in a critical situation passing the defiles which I know separated him from his avant garde. I soon succeeded in the first, and as I ran not the least risk of committing myself I was tempted to try the last. Your Grace will see by my publick letter how near I was to success - Nothing but the intolerable heat prevented; the Thermometer at 94 in the shade, is not a climate for troops to act with Vigour in at noon day, but some power more appeared in troops: our first object was fully answered, & I really believe [p.3] we left Washington very sore, not a shot was fired from that day, new operations are now to take place. I have little more to answer for, than due a mention to my Instructions here. I followed them as to the manner of quitting Philadelphia [words illegible] serious bad consequences might have followed. Destaing would have met us at the mouth of Delaware where we are informed he is at this moment; where is Byron? 'tis possible if he arrives in time that such a movement of fleet and Army may take place as - but not a word should be said of it. Lord H.'s present fleet is very inferior to that of the French, but our marine Chief and also his associates, are of the right cast. If he determines to attempt I augur well and old England may again walk haut la tête. If the present plan of operations [p.4] go on your Grace will see that I can not be of the least use here, and shall therefore be permitted to go home. I heartily pray that the meannes [?] adopted by Gov[ernmen]t may operate, I dare not flatter myself they will had I left to my first instructions. If America is Will and object she possibly might have been recovered, as it is I fear she will be lost. England had but one Army, it was a good one, by late arrangements I fear great part of it will be destroyed. I am not at liberty to say more, nor should it be known I have said so much, but I am broken hearted. I beg my best respects to Lord and Lady Lincoln

& have the honour to be

Your Graces most h[umble] s[ervant]

H. Clinton

Lords T & S [?] Congress in Answer to the Commissioners decline Treaty unless their Independency is acknowledged, or fleet and Army sail home, talks much of treaties already entered into with Fr[ance].

Document 6

Ne C 2606 - Letter from General Sir Henry Clinton, to H.F.C. Pelham-Clinton, 2nd Duke of Newcastle under Lyne; 3 July 1779

July 3d 1779

My Dear Lord,

The Month of July arrived and no reinforcement, no troops, Equipage, in short nothing to enable me to continue my operations already begun. Inadequate as I fear it will be, the reinforcement ought to have been here the first of June at furthest. I was lucky in my attempt at Stony Point etc. Every day proves more and more to me its importance. Had the reinforcements arrived in time to have enabled me to follow it up a general action would probably have been the consequence. As it is I despair of that [p.2]. I must refer your Grace to S[ir] Will[iam] Erskine. I am sorry his health and private affairs obliged him to leave us, from him you will learn our situation, our hopes, our fears. 'Tis needless to complain of the total neglect of us, with what is sent (when it arrives) we will do the best. We are told that part of Grant's Corps returns to us, should that be true we shall be most thankfull. As I must stay this campaign I will work my utmost, but nothing can be expected from an Army above 20,000 men less than S[ir] W[illiam] Howe had, and Washington very little diminished in numbers. If this cursed War continues great alteration must be made in the conduct of it, the rebel Fleet is grown so insolent that it braves [p.3] our Port, and our whole little force must be assembled to protect us. I tremble for the Cork Fleet of victuallers. At Boston they are starving, such as Captine [?] will save them; that which they made in April last going to Savanah under Convoy of a Privateer (as no ship of war could be spared) snatched them from distruction: in short if I may give my opinion freely we attend rather too much to pinzermaking. I heartily wish Lord Howe was at the head of the Ad---y [Admiralty]; he knows how the Navy on this station and in this war ought to be conducted, and he would direct accordingly. Privateering is one of the chiefs supports to a drooping lance, and so far from being able to stop up their posts, I am told we have scarcely sufficient to protect our own [p.4] If temperament does not write soon to Fleet and Army I should dread Consequences; not a word from Europe these 3 months - not a single farthing of Money - no information - no Army - nothing but good Spirits, a determination to do with what is given me all I can and a presentiment that all will go tolerably well - I sincerely hope this will be the last campaign of the War as it must be mine - Good God! What could prevent the reinforcement etc. sailing in March or April at furthest had that been done - but I will say no more - but with the greatest respect assure your Grace that I have the honor to be My lord

Your Graces very lov[ing]
affectionate & faithfull hum[ble] s[ervan]t
H. Clinton

[p.5]

Since I finished my letter to your Grace I find that L[ieutenant] Gen[eral] Jones intends to go to England by this opportunity, I must beg leave to refer your Grace to him, his ill health prevented his taking any very active command

among us but his intention as Commandant of N. York gave him an opportunity of knowing a great deal of our affairs.

HC

Document 7

Ne C 2640 - Letter from Sir H. Clinton, New York [U.S.A.], to H.F.C. Pelham-Clinton, 2nd Duke of Newcastle under Lyne; 19 Nov. 1779

New York Nov[embe]r 19th [1779]

My Dear Lord,

My last told you that Destaign with 22 sail of the line & 4 frigates &c., &c., and 6 or 8000 men was on the coast of Georgia & had probably landed. I have now the pleasure to inform you that an express is this moment arrived from thence with an account of Destaign's and Lincoln's having made a general assault upon Savannah on the 9th of October, were repulsed with great loss since which the Rebels retired into Carolina [p.2] and the French on board their Fleet. For further particulars I must refer you to Capt[ain] Loyd. 'Tis certainly the greatest event since the beginning of the War. We have likewise taken W[ashington's] dispatches to Destaign by which it appears that R[hode] Island and this place were their next objects. The French embarked the 22d and there was a violent gale of wind from 25th to 27th. 'Tis probable they suffered. I think they cannot remain on this coast, and when they quit it we may possibly begin. Lord Tho[mas] is very well & of course wishes to your Lordship. I refer you to Mr. Eden to whom I write more at large. I have written a short letter to the Duke giving him the above particulars. I have the honor to be faithfully

& affectionately
your Lordships humble ser[van]t
H. Clinton

Document 9

Ne C 2292 - Letter from Sir Henry Clinton, to H.F.C. Pelham-Clinton, 2nd Duke of Newcastle under Lyne; 17, 20 & 23 Sep. 1781

Sep[tembe]r 17th [1781]

My Dear Lord,

I acquainted your Grace that Washington had passed the North River, giving jealousy to us for Staten Island and suddenly moved towards Delaware on the second giving out that he expected la Grasse. I have embarked 9000 men to follow him the moment that I hear from the Admiral that it is safe, for I am convinced the only way to relieve Lord Cornwallis is to join him and his Lordship is of the same opinion. Lord C--- has inclu[din]g seamen marines and refugees, good 8000: he has provisions at full allowance till the end of next month for 20,000 men.

Sep[tembe]r 20th. La Grasse and Barras have by the Admiral's letter joined before our fleet arrived off Chesapeake. There was a partial action on the 5th,

19 against 24, our fleet has suffer'd more than the French, so much so, that the Admiral finds it necessary to come here for repairs. God send that Ad[mira]l [p.2] Digby may arrive soon, 5 ships will give us a decided superiority. The French have landed 3800 'tis said, Washington marches with about 6 or 7000, Lafayette had before 2000, this is all regular force, they have armed a numerous unpractised Militia. Every exertion must be made to save L.C. anyway, I hope the Adm[ira]l will take us all on board, we may assist in the brush he may have with the French fleet, and then if he succeeds land us to try for a junction with Lord Cornwallis. The Admiral must not only open the door of Chesapeak but go in with us and remain to cooperate and feed us, for should we land without provisions, even join Lord Cornwallis and obtain a victory we could not subsist and Washington will scarcely be able to do so even, altho he now commands the waters of the Chesapeake and has the exertion of the whole country for him. If the navy shall not be able to assist us in a direct move to save L.C--- I must commit what troops I can spare from this important post to such indirect operations as I shall judge best, but I should despair of relieving his Lordship.

[p.3] Sep[tembe]r 23d.

We are this day told that the French Fleet has not been joined by Barras, and that it already consists of 28 sail of the line. I hope 'tis a rebel forgery, as if [illegible word] and Barras should join they will be 35 to 19. Instead of a fleet under S[ir] G. Rodney which we were told to expect, in case La Grasse came here "that our operations in Chesapeak might not be interrupted" only 14 sail came with [S]ir S[amuel] Hood, one of which was destroy'd at sea (being found unfit for service) and they could scarcely [illegible word] in to this port. It is thus that operations depending upon a naval superiority are to be supported, but this is not a time for vain lamentation. I hope Ad[mira]l Digby will soon come, that our present fleet will be repaired soon, and that we shall be able to face that of the Enemy whose numbers I do not think so high as reported for all the Navy in the action thought Barras had joined, the 5th a lucky exertion may gain us the Entry of the Chesapeak, put me ashore and I may succeed in forming a junction. I beg my best respects to Lord John & have the honor to be my Lord

your Graces most affectionate
hu[m]ble s[ervan]t
H. Clinton

[p.4]

26 Sep[tembe]r

I hear 'tis confirmed that the French are 36 of the line and we altho A[dmiral] Digby is answered no more than 23. Something must be done [by] noon today to relieve L[ord] Cornwallis & nothing but a joint operation of Fleet and Army can. I am ready with the troops when ever the navy is repaired, & will [illegible word], to much zeal appears in both services that all that we dare hope for [illegible words] Impardonable Inferiority may be.

Document 10

Ne C 2309 - Letter from C. Cornwallis, 2nd Earl Cornwallis, Yorktown [U.S.A.], to Sir Henry Clinton; 11 Oct. 1781

York Town Virginia
12 M. 11th Oct[obe]r 1781

Sir,

Cochran arrived yesterday. I have only to repeat what I said in my last letter of the 3d. that nothing but a direct move to York River, which includes a successful naval action can save me. The Enemy made their first Parallel on the night of the 6th at the distance of 600 yards & perfected it, & constructed places of arms and Batteries with great regularity and caution. On the even[ing] of the 9th their Batteries opened & have since continued firing without intermission with about forty pieces of Cannon mostly heavy, & 16 mortars from 8 to 16 Inches. We have lost about seventy men and many of our Works are considerably damaged. With such Works on disadvantageous ground against so powerfull an attack we cannot hope to make a long resistance.

I have the Honor &c. &c. &c.
(signed) Cornwallis

His Excellency
S[i]r H. Clinton

P.S. Since the above was written we have lost thirty men

Document 11

Ne C 2311/1 - Copy letter from C. Cornwallis, 2nd Earl Cornwallis, Yorktown, to Sir H. Clinton; 15 Oct. 1781

York Town Virginia
15th October 1781

Sir,

Last Evening the Enemy carried my two advanced Redoubts on the Left by Storm, and during the Night have included them in their Second Parellel, which they are at present busy in perfecting.

My Situation now becomes very critical. We dare not shew a Gun to their old Batteries, and I expect their new Ones will be open tomorrow Morning. Experience has shewn that our fresh Earthen Works do not resist their powerful Artillery, so that we shall soon be exposed to an Assault in ruined Works, in a bad Position and with weakened Numbers.

The Safety of the Place is therefore so precarious that I cannot recommend that the Fleet and Army should run great Risque in endeavouring to save us.

I have the honor to be, with great Respect
Sir, &c. &c.
Signed, Cornwallis

His Excellency
Sir Henry Clinton K.B.

Document 12

Ne C 2290 - Copy letter from Sir H. Clinton, H.M.S. 'London' off

Chesapeake Bay [U.S.A.], to G.S. Germain, 1st Viscount Sackville; 29 Oct. 1781

His Majesty's Ship London
off Chesapeak 29th October 1781

My Lord,

Agreeable to the Information which I had the Honor to give your Lordship in my last Dispatch, the Fleet under the Command of Rear Admiral Graves sailed from Sandy Hook on the 19th Instant, and arrived off Cape Charles the 24th. When we had the Mortification to hear that Lord Cornwallis had proposed Terms of Capitulation to the Enemy on the 17th. This intelligence was brought us by the Pilot of the Charon and some other Persons, who came off from the Shore and said they had made their Escape from York on the 18th and had not heard any firing there since the day before. The Nymph Frigate also arriving the next day from [p.2] New York brought me a letter from his Lordship dated the 15th; the desponding Tenor of which gives me the most alarming apprehensions of its Truth.

Since then we have been plying off the Capes with variable and hard Gales of Wind to the present Hour, without being able to procure any further Information, except from two Men taken in a Canoe, whose Report exactly corresponds with the former. Comparing therefore the Intelligence given by these People and several others since come in with the Purport of Lord Cornwallis's letter, Copies of both which I have the Honor to inclose for your Lordship's Information, we cannot entertain the least Doubt of his Lordship having capitulated, and that we are unfortunately too late to relieve him. Which being the only [p.3] Officers of the King's Ships for the Cheefulness with which they submitted to many and great Inconveniences for our Accommodation on this Service.

I have the Honor to be with great Respect
Your Lordship's
Most Obedient and
Most humble Servant
Signed H.C.