



Map of Philadelphia, 1776. (Courtesy of Historical Society of Pennsylvania.)

THE ORDEAL OF ELIZABETH DRINKER

THERE were numerous contemporary observers of the revolutionary conflict in America. Such individual accounts serve a dual role of elucidating that complex and momentous struggle, and at the same time, revealing the effect of the conflict on the observers themselves. One such observer and victim of that unique struggle as it unfolded in Pennsylvania was Elizabeth Drinker.

Elizabeth Drinker was the wife of Henry Drinker (1734–1809), a prominent and prosperous Philadelphia iron manufacturer, land speculator, and shipping merchant, and the mother of four young children when the Revolution began in 1775. As members of the Society of Friends, a pacifist religious minority, and lifetime residents of Philadelphia, the Drinkers were in the unenviable position of being suspected by the revolutionary authorities and the local populace of harboring pro-British sympathies, for which they were harshly and unjustly treated.¹ Furthermore, she and her children remained in Philadelphia throughout the British occupation of the city, from the autumn of 1777 to the spring of 1778, and consequently experienced many of the privations and ill-treatment of most other civilian inhabitants, despite their material advantages.

1. Although some of the older, wealthier Quakers in the Philadelphia area apparently harbored pro-British sentiments, 420 Quakers from twenty Monthly Meetings in southeastern Pennsylvania, the area of the Society's greatest concentration, defied their pacifist elders, took up arms in the revolutionary cause, and were consequently expelled from the Society of Friends. Only fifteen of this group changed sides, while a mere additional sixteen dissidents from this same area joined His Majesty's forces. The total membership of Meetings in 1760 was about 8,000. Unfortunately, no total membership figures are available for the revolutionary years (1775–1783). Kenneth A. Radbill, "Quaker Patriots: The Leadership of Owen Biddle and John Lacey, Jr.," *Pennsylvania History*, 45 (1978): 47–48. Allen Nevins estimated that approximately one-fifth of the entire Quaker population capable of bearing arms was serving in the Continental Army by 1777. Allen Nevins, *The American States During and After the American Revolution, 1775–1789* (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1924), p. 252.

The daily trials and tribulations of the Drinkers, together with references to the surrounding military conflict, were noted by this spirited Quakeress in her journal which she kept faithfully from 1759 until her death in 1807, at the age of seventy-two.² Although Mrs. Drinker took note of the major events of the entire conflict, her attention to the war was naturally focused on the more immediate series of events which began with the Battle of the Brandywine in September 1777, and ended with the British evacuation of Philadelphia in June of the following year.

The late summer of 1777 marked the beginning of an especially trying time for forty-two-year-old Elizabeth since the Pennsylvania authorities had just arrested her husband, together with forty other prominent Quakers, and had initially confined them in the city's Masonic Lodge (the city jail being full) without trial, on charge of being "notoriously disaffected" from the American cause. Worried about her husband's safety and ultimate fate, Mrs. Drinker was left to manage family affairs in an atmosphere of extreme confusion and non-Quaker hostility.³ Therefore, the vivid narrative of Elizabeth Drinker begins with the detention of her husband during the Battle of the Brandywine.

On Tuesday afternoon, 9 September 1777, Elizabeth, with her daughter Sally, visited her husband at the Lodge, and "found him well." But during her stay, she received word that the Executive

2. Elizabeth Drinker, *The Journal of Elizabeth Drinker, 1759 to 1807*, Drinker mss., Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (hereafter cited as HSP).

3. Despite numerous declarations of neutrality by the Society of Friends, the revolutionary authorities maintained their suspicions of Quaker disloyalty. Congressional suspicions were confirmed in late August by the appearance of a number of forged letters from a fictitious Spanktown Meeting in northern New Jersey, which offered evidence that Quakers there had given military information to the British in New York. Congress quickly accepted the forgeries at face value on the twenty-eighth, and urged the arrest of those prominent Quakers who had proven to be against the revolutionary cause. Henry Drinker and eleven others were included in this category. The Pennsylvania Supreme Executive Council enthusiastically accepted this congressional recommendation and added thirty more names on the thirty-first. Within one week, all of these Quakers were imprisoned. The Spanktown letters were exposed as forgeries three years later, but the revolutionary authorities gave neither apologies nor compensation. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Minutes, Nov., 1775, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pa.; Pemberton Papers, HSP, XXVIII: 75, XXX: 49, 96; *Pennsylvania Archives* (Harrisburg: State Printing Office, 1896), 1st Series, 4:554-555; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 10 September 1777; Drinker, *Journal*, p. 45; Henry D. Biddle, ed., *Extracts From the Journal of Elizabeth Drinker, From 1759 to 1807 A.D.* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1889), p. 45; Theodore Thayer, *Israel Pemberton, King of the Quakers* (Philadelphia: HSP, 1943), pp. 212-216.

Council would banish the prisoners the next day when wagons were collected to carry them off. "I came home in great distress," she declared, and after preparing her children for bed, "went back near 10 O'clock at night," and "found ye prisoners finishing a Protest against the tyrannical conduct of ye present wicked rulers."⁴

After a day's delay for lack of wagons and drivers, the departure was set for 3:00 P.M. on 11 September. "Ye town is in great confusion at present," Mrs. Drinker noted, "a great firing heard below. It is supposed ye Armies are engaged. 'Tis also reported that several Men-of-War are coming up ye River." This was the first of many references that she would make regarding the nearby conflict. After dinner that evening, a servant ran to Elizabeth to inform her that the wagons were waiting at the Lodge "to take our dear friends away." "I went there," she continued, said farewell to Henry, "and went in great distress to James Pembertons' [sic]."⁵ The wagons departed around six o'clock, and the dejected Mrs. Drinker "came home at dusk."⁶

The next day brought a bit of good personal news, however, when she received a letter from her husband which gave her "great comfort." But the general news was of an altogether different sort as word of the American defeat on the Brandywine reached Philadelphia. "This has been a day of great confusion to many," she wrote. "A part of Washington's army has been routed, and have been seen coming into the Town in great numbers." "Ye slain" were "said to be very numerous" with "hundreds" of discarded "muskets laying in ye road." The wounded had been coming in that afternoon and Washington was supposedly in town that evening.⁷

On 13 September, Elizabeth discovered that Henry and his fellow exiles would be sent to Winchester, Virginia, not Reading, Pennsylvania, as first thought.⁸ Also, a number of residents were

4. Drinker, *Journal*, pp. 46-47; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, pp. 46-47.

5. James Pemberton was the son of Israel Pemberton, a wealthy merchant and landowner, and probably the most prominent Philadelphia Quaker. James, his brother John, and his father Israel were incarcerated with Henry Drinker. J. Thomas Scharf and Thompson Westcott, *History of Philadelphia (1609-1884)* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott and Co., 1884), 1:346; Thayer, *Israel Pemberton*, p. 216f.

6. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 47; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 47.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48; Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1:346-348; James T. Flexner, *George Washington in the American Revolution, 1775-1783* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1968), pp. 219-227.

8. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 48; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 48; Pemberton Papers, HSP XXX: 110; Thayer, *Israel Pemberton*, p. 222.

observed leaving the city that day. On the fourteenth, she was told that the British forces under Howe had occupied Chester and that Washington had left Philadelphia, and had just crossed the Schuylkill. A friend also brought comforting news that the prisoners "had lodged last night at Potts Grove" all apparently in good health.⁹

Two days later, the apprehensive Quakeress noted that carriages were "constantly passing, and the inhabitants going away." She also heard the first reports of looting in her neighborhood and took steps to protect the family's horse and cow by moving them into "ye washhouse." Elizabeth then briefly mentioned the recent, unsuccessful attempt of the exiles to obtain a writ of habeas corpus from the Executive Council and Congress.¹⁰ She was being exceedingly stoic in light of the disappointing news. The State Supreme Court had granted the requested writs to nine of the exiles, including Henry, but a new Pennsylvania law was passed within twenty-four hours, arbitrarily suspending habeas corpus for the duration of the conflict.¹¹ She then repeated rumors of "ye Church Bells being . . . taken down; ye Bridge over the Schuylkill taken up, and ye Ropes across ye Ferry cut."¹²

On 16 September, looters stole several barrels of flour from her stable that would be sorely needed later on. The next day Mrs. Drinker, in the midst of a severe "Equinoctial storm," briefly noted "a very disagreeable reception" of the exiles at Reading.¹³ When the prisoners arrived there on the fifteenth, they were greeted by an angry mob, which pulled two pacifists from their carriage and began beating them. Fortunately, the officers in charge rescued the two battered men and drove back the angry crowd. The irate citizenry later dispersed when they were informed that the prisoners were harmless. The town soon adopted a more lenient attitude

9. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 48; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 48.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

11. Clifford K. Shipton and James E. Mooney, eds., *Pennsylvania Session Laws, 1777, Laws Enacted in the Second General Assembly* (Philadelphia: American Antiquarian Society and Barre Publishers, 1969), p. 81; Henry Drinker to Elizabeth Drinker, 18 September 1777, Drinker Correspondence, Haverford College, Haverford, Pa.; Pemberton Papers, HSP, XXX:120; Thomas Gilpin, *Exiles in Virginia, with Observations on the Conduct of the Society of Friends during the Revolution* (Philadelphia: C. Sherman, 1840), p. 41; Thayer, *Israel Pemberton*, p. 223; Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1:346.

12. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 49; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 49; Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1:346.

13. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 49; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 49.

and the soldiers became friendly with their charges, granting them all requested privileges.¹⁴

While Elizabeth worried over her husband's plight, rumors abounded concerning the arrival of British forces. Confusion was rife as private property was arbitrarily confiscated by frantic revolutionary authorities who even placed cannon in some of the streets and on boats in the Delaware River, in a last futile effort to stave off the powerful invader. Fortunately during this time, Abel James, Henry's business partner, informed Elizabeth that their businesses were reasonably secure and that he would continue to manage them in Henry's absence. In addition friends brought word that the exiled party had reached Lebanon, Pennsylvania "all well."¹⁵

The conquerors finally made their appearance in Philadelphia on 26 September. "Well! here are ye English in earnest," she declared. "About 2 or 3000 came in through Second street, without opposition or interruption- no plundering on ye one side or ye other." Mrs. Drinker, revealing her natural resentment against the American authorities, asserted: "What a satisfaction it would be to our dear absent friends could they but be informed of it." She then mentioned that several men in her district were arrested, without further comment. "Cornwallis came in with those troops to day," she added. "Gen' Howe is not yet come in." That same day, a friend delivered one of her husband's letters, this one written from Pottsgrove, describing his situation there.¹⁶

The next morning, Elizabeth and her family witnessed a brief but dramatic naval engagement from their loft window, conveniently overlooking the Front Street wharf, ten blocks northeast of Independence Hall, as British forces began to contest the American control of the Delaware. "About 9 o'clock," she recounted, "the Province and Delaware Frigates, with several Gondelows [sic] came up ye River . . . to fire on ye Town." They were then fired upon by an English battery erected at the lower end of the city. "The engagement," she continued, "lasted half an hour, when

14. James Pemberton's Journal, Pemberton Papers, HSP, XXX:111, 121; Thayer, *Israel Pemberton*, pp. 222-223.

15. Drinker, *Journal*, pp. 51-52; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, pp. 51-52; Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1:349-350.

16. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 52; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 52; Henry Drinker to Elizabeth Drinker, 13 September 1777, Drinker Correspondence, HSP; Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1:350-351; Ira D. Gruber, *The Howe Brothers and the American Revolution* (New York: Atheneum, 1972), p. 241; Flexner, *Washington*, pp. 230-231.

many shots were exchanged." Although there appeared to be no civilian casualties, the population was "exceedingly alarmed." Furthermore, the American cook on the *Delaware* was said to have "had his head shot off" and "another of ye men wounded." She then related that the frigate ran aground, caught fire, and was boarded by the English as the other American vessels retreated. The skipper and his crew were taken prisoner, supposedly declaring that "their intentions were to destroy the Town." Later that day, Mrs. Drinker heard the sad news of the deaths of many non-Quaker neighbors serving in the rebel brigade of General Wayne "over ye Schuylkill."¹⁷

Elizabeth soon discovered that the British occupation forces could be something other than saviors. After attending meeting on 29 September, she noticed some English officers going about "numbering ye houses, with chalk on ye doors" (for the future quartering of officers), and "a number of citizens" were "taken up and imprisoned," evidently on suspicion of harboring rebel sympathies.¹⁸

One week later, Mrs. Drinker learned of the bloody, though indecisive, Battle of Germantown. "This has been a sorrowful day at Philad^a," she noted, "and much more so at Germantown and thereabouts," where "1000 of ye English" were reportedly slain. But Chalkley James, a close friend who witnessed the aftermath of the fighting around Benjamin Chew's house, where the main American assault was successfully resisted, "could not learn of more than 30 of ye English being killed, tho' a great number were wounded, and brought into the City." "He counted 18 of ye Americans lying dead in ye lane from ye Road to Chew's House," she continued. Ye house is very much damaged, as a few of ye English had taken shelter there, and were fired upon from ye road by great numbers of ye others."¹⁹ The fear of an American assault on the city and the firing from vessels on the *Delaware* would render that night "grievous to many," she continued. "Friends, and others

17. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 53; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 531; Scharf and Westcott, p. 352; Gruber, *Howe Brothers*, pp. 241, 244-247. Anthony Wayne, one of Washington's brigadiers, served at the Brandywine and elsewhere. Flexner, *Washington*, p. 229.

18. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 54; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 54; Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1:350-351.

19. Drinker, *Journal*, pp. 55-56; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, pp. 55-56; Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1:354-358; Gruber, *Howe Brothers*, p. 248; Flexner, *Washington*, pp. 231-237.

in ye Jerseys, and . . . around ye country,” were “suffering deeply.” Mrs. Drinker did not end her vigil that day until midnight, when the rest of the house was asleep, the night clear, and the city quiet.²⁰

On Sunday, 5 October, the Drinker household was relieved to hear no gunfire. That day, Elizabeth spoke to a friend who had visited with Henry in Winchester during the previous week, just after the exiles’ recent arrival there, and found him in good health.²¹ The next morning, Mrs. Drinker heard firing again. After breakfast, she visited Joshua Fisher’s drygoods store where she learned of a testimonial that some Quakers were planning to send to Washington, urging the release of the prisoners and an end to the entire conflict.²² At Abel James’ home that evening, Elizabeth was informed that the Drinkers’ suburban meadow was “spoiled by 300 Head of Cattle, which ye Americans had there for some time.” Later that evening, firing (“ye heaviest” that she had heard to date) resumed for about two hours, this time caused by English batteries directed against the rebels Mud island battery on the Delaware. “Great numbers” of wounded were brought into the city the following day, and when a British officer called that afternoon to request the admission of an injured captain into the Drinker home, Elizabeth declined, supposedly due to the absence of her husband, although a marked reluctance to assist either side in the conflict must have played some role in her refusal.²³

For the next week, 6 to 13 October, the Drinkers were disturbed by almost incessant gunfire as British and Hessian artillery unsuccessfully attempted to reduce the American fortifications on Province Island which blocked the Delaware channel just below the city and prevented His Majesty’s Atlantic Squadron from bringing up reinforcements and badly needed supplies. Some of the intense fighting could be witnessed from their attic window.²⁴ During this trying period, Elizabeth still found time to practice the traditional, impartial Quaker charity, sending two of her children with wine and coffee to assist “ye wounded men” of both sides residing in the city’s temporary hospitals nearby. Many of the British injured

20. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 56; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 56.

21. *Ibid.*; Pemberton Papers, HSP, XXX:152; Thayer, *Israel Pemberton*, p. 217.

22. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 56; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 56.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 57; Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, p. 360.

24. Drinker, *Journal*, pp. 57–59; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, pp. 57–59; Gruber, *Howe Brothers*, pp. 248–249.

were placed in the Municipal Theater, while many of the Americans were convalescing in the Statehouse.²⁵

That same week, Mrs. Drinker also heard of Washington's rejection of the petition which sought the release of the exiles. Since Elizabeth "had little expectations from their application," she was "not much disappointed" that little had come of it.²⁶ The frequent harassment and arrest by American soldiers of Quakers and non-Quakers alike who were passing in and out of the city was yet another concern as revolutionary authorities attempted to prevent the trafficking of provisions from the hinterland into enemy-occupied Philadelphia. Finally, renewed rumors of another rebel assault on the city caused "a number of people" to be "greatly alarmed." Mrs. Drinker, revealing her great physical and psychological strain at this time, briefly commented on 11 October: "I have been more distressed in mind this day than for some time past . . . my spirits seem much affected."²⁷

Some welcome relief from this constant strain was afforded on October fourteenth when a group of eleven Friends visited Elizabeth to convey the rare good news of the well being of "ye company at Winchester."²⁸ However, five days later, Mrs. Drinker again related renewed fears of an impending American invasion of the city as Washington's forces were reported to be within one mile of the Drinker home. Many families, several Quakers among them, had moved into Philadelphia from nearby Germantown. Food scarcity and high prices of every imaginable commodity were major concerns.²⁹

25. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 58; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 58; Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1:359. For a comprehensive explanation of Quaker charity during the American Revolution, see Sidney V. James, *A People Among Peoples, Quaker Benevolence in Eighteenth Century America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), pp. 240-267.

26. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 58; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 58. Three days after the Battle of Germantown, a delegation of six Quakers from the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting presented a testimonial to Washington to end the conflict as they had done to Howe, and unsuccessfully besought the American commander to release the exiles. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Minutes, October, 1777, Swarthmore; Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1:360.

27. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 58; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 58; Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia* 1:360; Gruber, *Howe Brothers*, pp. 244-246.

28. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 59; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 59; Pemberton Papers, HSP, XXX:154, 163; James Pemberton's Journal, Pemberton Papers, HSP, XXXII:59; Israel Pemberton to John Reynell, 12 October 1777, Haverford College MSS: Thayer, *Israel Pemberton*, pp. 225-227.

29. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 59; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 59; Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1:360-361; Gruber, *Howe Brothers*, pp. 249-252.

The next day, 20 October, Elizabeth recorded tales of property confiscations by "the Provincials," especially of horses, weapons, and food. There was skirmishing around Germantown and Philadelphia as well as firing on the River. "If things don't change ere long," she declared, "we shall be in a poor plight; everything scarce and dear, and nothing suffered to be brought in to us." That same day, Tom Pryor, a neighbor and fellow-Quaker, was arrested by the English "on suspicion . . . of sending intelligence to Washington's army."³⁰ This news was additional evidence that the Quakers were distrusted by both sides.

Three days later, the Drinker family witnessed a dramatic battle on the Delaware, as Howe's troops commenced operations against the American fortifications on Red Bank which blocked the river. "This day will be remembered by many," she related. "2500 Hessians, who crossed ye River, the day before yesterday, were last night driven back 2 or 3 times, in endeavoring to storm ye fort (Mercer) on Red Bank; 200 were slain and great numbers wounded. Ye firing this morning seemed to be incessant from ye Battery, the Gondelows [sic], and ye Augusta man-of-war, of 64 guns. She took fire, and after burning near 2 hours, blew up." Another, smaller English vessel was also reported burned. Many Philadelphians were "very much affected by ye present situation," while the Americans were "flushed and in spirits." The Hessians and British were encamped in New Jersey that night and the Drinkers could "see their fires for a considerable distance along ye shore."³¹

On 25 October, an English officer called requesting quarters for General Grant, the notorious anti-American braggart.³² Not desiring any military lodgers, regardless of their rank or allegiance, Mrs. Drinker used the excuse of her husband's absence and the care of her numerous offspring to decline the request, which was accepted. That evening she learned that the Americans had plundered the Frankford home of a neighbor.³³

One week later, Elizabeth received the news of Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga without comment, perhaps because she and

30. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 60; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 60; Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1:362-363.

31. *Ibid.*

32. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 61; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 61; Thomas Fleming, *1776, Year of Illusions* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975), pp. 311, 314, 317-318, 420, 428, 435, 437, 439, 459, 464.

33. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 61; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 61.

her family were concerned with more immediate and pressing matters. The Hessians were "plundering at a great rate; such things as wood, potatoes, turnips &c.," and provisions were still scarce. Life under the English occupation, especially in a material sense, was proving to be worse for the Drinkers than under the rebels.³⁴

Mrs. Drinker heard rumors on 12 November that rats were selling for five pounds in the nearby countryside. It was "bad enough" in the city, "but far from being like that," she declared, and hoped that conditions would not reach that state. That day, she gave beef, biscuits, and other food to three needy Quakers. Prices of "Poor Beef," veal, butter, chocolate, brown sugar, and candles had greatly increased, Elizabeth commented. Flour, in extremely short supply, was priced nearly beyond reach, while oak wood was selling between seventeen and twenty pounds per cord, and was "scarcely possible" to be "cut or hauled." Meanwhile, English soldiers seized the Drinkers' former residence on Water street, but promised not to destroy anything.³⁵

Firing "like thunder" resumed on 15 November as the British men-of-war, *Vigilant* and *Somerset*, bombarded "the formidable Mud Island Battery (Ft. Mifflin)," which was "not yet conquered, tho' greatly damaged." Fortunately, good news came that evening, when Mrs. Drinker received two letters from her "dearest Henry", the first that she had received from him since he left Reading. He mentioned two others which never arrived, but was in "good spirits", which pleased her greatly.³⁶ Fort Mifflin fell to British troops the next day, after weeks of unnerving gunfire. But the Americans had managed to escape during the night, and the Delaware channel was still blocked by rebel batteries on Red Bank, as well as by chevaux-de-frise and numerous small vessels.³⁷

34. *Ibid.*, p. 62; Gruber, *Howe Brothers*, pp. 243-244, 251.

35. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 63; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 63; Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1:360, 365-366.

36. Drinker, *Journal*, pp. 63-64; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, pp. 63-64; Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1:362-364; Gruber, *Howe Brothers*, pp. 256-259; Henry Drinker to Elizabeth Drinker, 14 October 1777, 17 October 1777, Drinker Correspondence, HSP. Elizabeth and Henry Drinker wrote over seventy letters to one another during his exile, but the disruptive effects of the conflict, combined with distance and the normal uncertainties of eighteenth-century travel, caused frequent delays and occasional loss of correspondence. By eventually numbering their letters to keep better track of them, together with occasional visits by Philadelphia Friends to Winchester and correspondence to and from the other exiles, they were able to narrow the communications gap. Drinker Correspondence, Haverford; Drinker Correspondence, HSP.

37. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 64; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 64; Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1:364; Gruber, *Howe Brothers*, p. 259.

The clamorous reduction of the American battery on Red Bank (Ft. Mercer), the awesome sight of burning and exploding ships as the Americans scuttled their entire fleet near the Drinker home, harassment from an elderly Hessian officer who insisted on putting his horse in the Drinkers' stable, reports of skirmishing close by, and rumors of another rebel assault upon the city, held Elizabeth's attention during the twentieth and twenty-first of November. "This has been a day replete with events," she concluded on the twenty-first, with considerable understatement. "My Head aches."³⁸

"Cannon and small arms fire" resumed on the morning of November twenty-second. The English burned an American schooner "nearly opposite" the Drinker home as one thousand Americans reportedly attacked English pickets on the western outskirts of the city. The rebels were repulsed, and when several took shelter in John Dickinson's home,³⁹ the English set fire to it and neighboring dwellings, including that of Dickinson's fellow revolutionary, Charles Thomson.⁴⁰ Because such buildings had been convenient vantage points for American snipers, there was talk of "burning all of ye Houses within four miles of ye city . . ." The burning ship and dwellings were also visible from atop the Drinker home. "These two days past have been big with events and alarms . . .," she wearily concluded.⁴¹

Two days later, after additional minor clashes on the Delaware and around the city, Mrs. Drinker saw "an agreeable sight"—the "Wharves lined with shipping", which had just arrived that day, under protection of His Majesty's fleet. With the Delaware at

38. Drinker, *Journal*, pp. 65–66; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, ed., pp. 65–66; Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1:364; Gruber, *Howe Brothers*, p. 260.

39. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 66; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 66. John Dickinson (1732–1808), a distinguished Philadelphia lawyer, legislator, member of the Stamp Act Congress, and later of both Continental Congresses, had written the famous "Letters of a Farmer in Pennsylvania to the Inhabitants of the British Colonies", the most effective constitutional argument for resistance to the Townshend Duties. Charles J. Stillé, *The Life and Times of John Dickinson, 1732–1808* (New York: Ben Franklin Press, 1969).

40. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 66; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 66. Charles Thomson (1729–1824) was a prominent Philadelphia merchant, an intellectual leader, a radical in Pennsylvania politics, and congressional secretary. Kenneth R. Bowling, "Good-by Charlie: The Lee-Adams Interest and the Political Demise of Charles Thomson, Secretary of Congress, 1774–1789," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 100 (1976):314–335.

41. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 66; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 66; Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1:364–365, 367–368.

last cleared of rebel obstacles, the food situation, especially regarding flour, was temporarily improved. Further good news of her husband came in the form of "a General letter" from Winchester, indicating that he was in good health.⁴²

Additional trials of a more immediate nature came on Sunday, 25 November. Shortly before 9:00 AM, the Drinker household was suddenly terrorized by a young English captain, an apparent friend of Elizabeth's servant girl, Ann, who forced his way into their home, waving his sword and swearing profusely. Mrs. Drinker and her sister hastily gathered up the children and locked themselves in the parlor, where he vigorously beat upon the door demanding entrance. "Our poor, dear children were never so frightened before," she declared, "—to have an enraged, drunken man . . . with a sword in hand, swearing about ye house." Four gentlemen friends finally came to assist the Drinkers, and persuaded the troublesome officer to depart, taking the servant girl with him. But by then, it was one o'clock the next morning, and the distressed Mrs. Drinker remained "in a flutter" for the next twenty-four hours.⁴³

The plundering of civilians in the city by British and Hessian troops continued unabated, as friends and neighbors alike fell victim to this traditional practice of occupying armies. Even a letter from Henry on 8 December did not revive Elizabeth's dismal spirits. "Things seem to wear but an unpromising appearance at present," she lamented, "but ye absence of my dear Husband is worse to me than all ye rest put together."⁴⁴ She then spoke of other troubles. "Nothing will pass at this time . . . but Gold and Silver, which is hard upon those who have a quantity of ye old paper money . . ." Furthermore, the wooden fence around the Drinkers' Water street house was pulled up, evidently to be used for firewood.⁴⁵

Eight days later, Elizabeth was "much surprised and fluttered" to hear tales of the imminent release of the exiles. She tried not to be

42. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 67; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 67; Philadelphia Monthly Meeting Minutes, Southern District (1772–1780), November 1777, Swarthmore; Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1:365; Gruber, *Howe Brothers*, p. 260; Flexner, *Washington*, p. 250.

43. Drinker, *Journal*, pp. 67–68; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, pp. 67–68.

44. *Ibid.*, pp. 70–71; Henry Drinker to Elizabeth Drinker, 18 November 1777, Drinker Correspondence, HSP.

45. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 71; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 71; Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1:366–367; Gruber, *Howe Brothers*, p. 294.

"too sanguine" for fear of more false rumors. Mrs. Drinker's reaction was wise, since they would not be released for some time. Although the prisoners now had the assistance of a young Virginia lawyer, Alexander White, who worked for their release, he succeeded only in getting the Executive Council to recommend their enlargement to Congress.⁴⁶ Meanwhile, His Majesty's soldiers continued to set the family on edge with nocturnal lootings in the neighborhood. "I often feel afraid to go to Bed," she wrote that night.⁴⁷

Despite this formidable host of difficulties, the resolute and charitable Quakeress noted on 15 December that she and a number of other members of her meeting had "agreed to send orders to sundry merchants in London for a cargo of provisions and coal" for the needy inhabitants of the city.⁴⁸ She also noticed that "officers and soldiers" were now "quartering themselves upon ye Families generally" and was "in daily expectation of their calling . . ."⁴⁹

Elizabeth's expectations were rewarded three days later, when a Major Crammond called that afternoon "to look for Quarters for some officer of distinction". Despite her protests, he insisted that it was "a necessary protection at these times" to have a military guest in a civilian household. The officer then urged her to reconsider and promised to return in a day or two. "He behaved with much politeness," she favorably noted, "which has not been ye case at many other places" where they have been "very rude and impudent." Although she didn't wish to have a lodger, she feared that it was necessary, and appeared "likely to be a general thing." "This has been a very trying day to my spirit," she added.⁵⁰

Nevertheless, for the next two weeks, Mrs. Drinker postponed making her decision as to whether to accept the major's repeated requests for lodging in her home. Meanwhile, she was distracted by more distressing news. First of all, two friends informed her on 22 December that her husband and the other exiles were to be

46. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 72; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 72; Israel Pemberton to Mary Pemberton, 19 December 1777, 22 December 1777, Pemberton Papers, HSP, XXXI:75; John White to Israel Pemberton, 26 December 1777, *loc. cit.*; Mary Pemberton to Israel Pemberton, 7 January 1778, Pemberton Papers, HSP, XXXII: 61; Henry Drinker to Elizabeth Drinker, 12 January 1778, Drinker Correspondence, Haverford; Thayer, *Israel Pemberton*, pp. 227-228.

47. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 72; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 72.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 73; Philadelphia Monthly Meeting Minutes, S.D. (1772-1780), December 1777, Swarthmore.

49. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 73; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 73.

50. *Ibid.*

moved farther into Virginia.⁵¹ Then, she heard that the body of John Molesworth, formerly a young clerk in the mayor's office whom the rebels had executed as a spy the previous March, had been disinterred by a group of British soldiers and loyalist civilians, given a macabre parade about the city, then reburied in the Quaker cemetery, an act that would long agitate Friends. This last deed was "a foolish notion" in her opinion, since it only stirred up ill feeling against Quakers.⁵² Finally, Elizabeth learned the next day that British soldiers and neighborhood children were tearing down the Drinker house on Water Street, believing that it belonged to a rebel. Several friends tried to dissuade the inimical crowd in vain, and little was salvaged.⁵³

Even Christmas Day brought no rest as small groups of American skirmishers attacked the British lines without success, though "a cannon ball came as far as ye Barracks" within the city, and the usual rumors revived of another projected assault upon Philadelphia.⁵⁴ Two days later, the first of several American floating mines—clockwork mechanisms mounted on barrels of gunpowder—were sent down the Delaware "by evil minded . . . persons" against British shipping. Some blew up near the man-of-war, HMS *Roebuck*, destroying only a small boat and killing two boys; several others were found later.⁵⁵

Mrs. Drinker finally consented to have Major Crammond move into her home on the twenty-ninth, which he did the following day. The major apparently was a man of some means since he brought with him three servants, "2 white Men and one Negro

51. Ibid., p. 75. The explanation for this sudden decision was the charge by the congressional Board of War of Quaker speculation in continental currency. The order for removal to Staunton was finally rescinded when neither Congress nor the Pennsylvania Executive Council wished to claim the prisoners, both declaring that they were the responsibility of the other. In fact, by January, neither body claimed any fault with the exiles other than their July, 1776 declarations opposing independence and warning Quaker youth to refrain from participation in or support of the conflict. These statements supported the opinion held by exiles that one of the main reasons for their banishment was their influence in preventing young Friends from supporting the Revolution. *Pennsylvania Archives*, Harrisburg, First Series, 5:74; Israel Pemberton to Mary Pemberton, 19 December 1777, 22 December 1777, Pemberton Papers, HSP, XXXI:75; Thayer, *Israel Pemberton*, pp. 226-229.

52. Drinker, *Journal*, pp. 76-77; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, pp. 76-77; Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1:372.

53. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 77; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 77.

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid., p. 78; Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1:372.

boy called Damon" (two of them stayed with a neighbor to avoid overcrowding), "3 Hessians," who served "as messengers, or orderly men, . . . 3 Horses, 3 Cows, 2 Sheep and 2 Turkeys—with several Fowls." All of his menagerie was crowded into the Drinkers' stable.⁵⁶ Fortunately, Mrs. Drinker reported at year's end, the major appeared to be "a thoughtful, sober young man" with a well-behaved servant as well. He soon became one of the family, and some of the tensions of military occupation were alleviated by his presence; the orgy of looting in the neighborhood disappeared and the food supply increased.⁵⁷

On the second day of the new year (1778), Elizabeth again heard rumors of the imminent release of the exiles, but still considered it "a doubtful matter."⁵⁸ The next day, Mrs. Drinker had the satisfaction of seeing on the street the disorderly officer who had terrorized her household and abducted her servant girl. She immediately demanded monetary compensation for the loss of the servant, and after repeated threats of punishment for his past behavior, he wandered off, "seemingly confused."⁵⁹ Meanwhile, floating mines were still drifting down the river, and were being shot at by nervous British soldiery, causing considerable noise, confusion, and discomfort.⁶⁰

Mrs. Drinker heard unconfirmed reports of the exiles' actual release on 10 January. "I have heard ye same report, several times, since morning," she lamented, "and . . . cannot believe such news." Yet, she would be "grievously disappointed if it should fall through." A letter from Henry confirming such reports would have greatly reassured her. But none came. On 13 January, Elizabeth bleakly noted the seventeenth anniversary of their marriage. Four days later, she discovered to her disappointment that the rumors of the exiles' release had "all come to nothing."⁶¹

While Elizabeth and her family brooded over the prolonged absence of the head of the household, the major, who had taken over more of the house and all of the stable with his numerous possessions, was merrily attending plays and concerts almost daily.

56. Drinker, *Journal*, pp. 78–79; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, pp. 78–79.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 78.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

59. *Ibid.*, pp. 79–80.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 81; Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1:372.

Concurrently, British troops were amassing enormous quantities of horse fodder, which apparently would last "but a little time," since they were said to be consuming "24 Tons per day." Meanwhile, rumors revived of a projected release of the prisoners, and Elizabeth was understandably plagued with headaches and insomnia.⁶²

In the midst of these discomforts, Mrs. Drinker received a bit of good news. A letter from Henry arrived on 4 February (the first since 27 December) informing her that the exiles would not be sent to a more distant place; "an agreeable piece of intelligence," she noted. However, the next day, friends and in-laws told her that the prisoners would not be released unless they took a test oath to the new American government. She bitterly noted that such an offer was "all sham" since the revolutionary authorities knew quite well that Quakers were bound by their religion not to swear or take oaths, especially in support of a government created by violence.⁶³

By mid-February, Mrs. Drinkers' taut nerves were further strained by Major Crammond who persistently gave large, noisy, and prolonged dinner parties. After she gave him "some hints" about his obnoxious behavior, however, he "behaved better." Meanwhile, the British army continued accumulating "great quantities of wood and hay," and Elizabeth gave two dollars ". . . for ye poor."⁶⁴ Another letter from Henry arrived on 23 February with the anticipated ill tidings. The test oath was given, the exiles refused to take it, and hopes for a reunion were "all crushed for the present."⁶⁵ More distressing news soon followed. Two days later, Mrs. Drinker received three more letters from her husband, all of which told of his recent illness. His "indisposition" naturally caused her much

62. Drinker, *Journal*, pp. 82-83; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, pp. 82-83.

63. *Ibid.*, p. 84; Henry Drinker to Elizabeth Drinker, 26 January 1778, Drinker Correspondence, Haverford; Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1:373.

64. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 85; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 85.

65. *Ibid.*; Henry Drinker to Elizabeth Drinker, 7 February 1778, Drinker Correspondence, Haverford. Late in January, Congress, still uncertain about what to do with the exiles, and ignoring White's efforts for the enlargement of the prisoners, decided to discharge any of those who would take an oath or affirmation of allegiance to the revolutionary government. Although a few of the exiles briefly considered taking the affirmation for their release, Israel Pemberton, Henry Drinker, and most of the others, true to their pacifist beliefs, refused, and consequently, everyone remained in captivity. Henry Drinker to Elizabeth Drinker, 7 February 1778, Drinker Correspondence, Haverford; Pemberton Papers, XXXI:129; Thayer, *Israel Pemberton*, p. 229.

anguish, and she waited anxiously for further word.⁶⁶ This was first news of the serious epidemic that struck Winchester in late January, which ultimately claimed the lives of Thomas Gilpin and John Hunt. Henry and others were stricken with various complaints, usually accompanied by fever.⁶⁷ Elizabeth encountered physical distress as well on the evening of 27 February when she entered the kitchen after dark and collided with Heritta, the Hessian stable boy, receiving a black eye and a swollen cheek as a result.⁶⁸

For the next few weeks, Mrs. Drinker apprehensively awaited word from her ailing husband while rumors again circulated about the exiles' imminent release. Congress and the Executive Council had supposedly given custody of the prisoners to the Pennsylvania Assembly which would set them free.⁶⁹ Although this had not been done, Congress and the Pennsylvania Government, persistently lobbied by Quakers from Pennsylvania and Maryland, and now lacking firm convictions about the exiles' disloyalty, were growing increasingly skeptical of the justification for their banishment. Therefore, by March, both governments were giving serious consideration to the prisoners' release.⁷⁰ On the fourteenth of that month, Susy Jones, a Quaker friend, spoke of going to Congress about this matter, and Elizabeth ignored "the several broad hints" that she should accompany her. Later that week, everyone was kept awake on St. Patrick's Day by uproariously drunken Irish soldiers who repeatedly paraded about the city.⁷¹

On the first day of spring, Mrs. Drinker finally received some welcome information of a more substantial nature. Several friends told her that the Assembly had favorably received a delegation of Quakers, and had then voted to send two representatives along

66. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 86; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 86; Henry Drinker to William Drinker, 16 February 1778, Drinker Correspondence, HSP; Henry Drinker to James Drinker, 16 February 1778, *loc. cit.*; Henry Drinker to Abel James, 16 February, *loc. cit.*

67. Henry Drinker to Elizabeth Drinker, 16 February 1778, *loc. cit.*; James Pemberton's *Journal*, Pemberton Papers, HSP, XXXI:83, 129, 159; Thayer, *Israel Pemberton*, pp. 229-230.

68. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 86; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 86.

69. *Ibid.*, p. 87.

70. Israel Pemberton to Mary Pemberton, 26 January 1778, Pemberton Papers, HSP, XXXII:61; Petition to Congress, 27 January 1778, Cox, Parrish, Wharton Collection, HSP; Henry Drinker to Elizabeth Drinker, 25 January 1778, Drinker Collection, HSP; Thayer, *Israel Pemberton*, p. 229.

71. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 87; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 87.

with two others from the Executive Council to Winchester, to determine whose prisoners they were. If they were under the Assembly's jurisdiction, that body would release them.⁷² Unfortunately, Elizabeth was soon beset with more immediate concerns. On 25 March, she found the stable out of hay and had to consider giving up the cow at a time when there were other severe food shortages. Two days later, she received confirmation of the death of Thomas Gilpin, one of the exiles, as well as accounts of illnesses of several other prisoners, in a letter from Thomas Wharton, a prominent member of the Winchester party. The letter also stated that their group had "no medicines, wine, sugar, vinegar, nor many other necessary articles . . ." It had been three weeks since the date of those letters, and "the thought of what may have happened in the interim" distressed her greatly.⁷³

On the last day of March, Mrs. Drinker attended a Quaker meeting especially concerned with the plight of the exiles, where she was asked to be one of four women to take a petition to Congress requesting the prisoners' release and assuming responsibility for their custody—a project discussed by her meeting for the past week. Elizabeth noted regretfully that she wished she "felt better both in mind and body for such an undertaking." Meanwhile, someone rode off to obtain Washington's permission to send a wagon to Winchester with food and medicines, believing the prisoners to be deprived of life's necessities. Though unnecessary, news of the wagon's despatch probably bolstered their low morale.⁷⁴ Two days later, Mrs. Drinker was saddened to learn of the death of another exile, John Hunt.⁷⁵ In the meantime, her fellow Quakers were seeking "horses and drivers" for the lady-petitioners, and Elizabeth purchased a vinegar bottle and other "sundries" for the westward trek.⁷⁶

72. Ibid., p. 88; *Pennsylvania Archives*, Harrisburg, First Series, 5:401; James Pemberton's Journal, Pemberton Papers, HSP, XXXI:159.

73. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 89; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 89; Thomas Wharton to Rachel Hunt, 6 March 1778, Wharton Collection, HSP.

74. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 90; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 90; Philadelphia Monthly Meeting Minutes, S.D. (1772–1780), March 1778, Swarthmore; Mary Pemberton to George Washington, 3 March 1778, Parrish Collection: Pemberton Papers, HSP; Revolutionary Papers, XX:57, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, Pa.; Thayer, *Israel Pemberton*, p. 230.

75. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 90; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 90.

76. Ibid., p. 91.

On Sunday, 5 April, at 2:00 P.M., Elizabeth Drinker, Mary Pemberton, Susan Jones, and Molly Pleasants, fortified with £29.15 and 160 continental dollars, departed Philadelphia in a coach pulled by four horses, attended by two Negro drivers, and the first of several mounted escorts, acting in relays.⁷⁷ The first leg of the journey to Washington's headquarters at Valley Forge was a ten-mile trip to John Roberts' Mill. This proved to be uneventful, except for encountering an American "scouting party of near one hundred men" who "behaved civilly [sic]," and stayed at the Roberts home "but a short time."⁷⁸

After spending an anxious night at the Roberts farmhouse, the small party proceeded to the American lines the next day, reaching Washington's headquarters "at about ½ past one We requested an audience with the General," Elizabeth recounted, "and sat with his wife, (a sociable, pretty kind of woman), until he came in." "G. Washington" soon arrived, she continued, "and discoursed with us freely, but not so long as we . . . wished, as dinner was served." There were fifteen officers in addition to Washington, his wife, General Nathanael Greene, a lame ex-Quaker Rhode-Islander who was Washington's closest adviser and Commissary-General of the Continental Army,⁷⁹ and General Charles Lee, an eccentric British officer serving in the American cause, later courtmartialed for his controversial conduct at the Battle of Monmouth.⁸⁰ After an "elegant dinner," the Quaker ladies were taken to Martha Washington's quarters. Before bidding his guests farewell, Washington told them that there was nothing more he could do other than "granting . . . a Pass to Lancaster, which he did."⁸¹ Washington considered the matter of the exiles beyond his jurisdiction, and turned the problem over to Thomas Wharton, Jr., President of the Executive Council, an ex-Quaker, and cousin of the exiled Thomas Wharton, Sr., but clearly stated that allowing the Quakeresses to proceed was safer than compelling them to remain. They appeared to be "much distressed," he added, and "humanity pleads in their behalf."⁸²

77. Ibid., p. 92.

78. Ibid., pp. 92-93.

79. Ibid., p. 93; Theodore Thayer, *Nathanael Greene, Strategist of the American Revolution* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1960).

80. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 93; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 93; John R. Alden, *General Charles Lee, Traitor or Patriot?* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951).

81. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 93; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 93.

82. George Washington to Thomas Wharton, 6 April 1778, Parrish Collection: Pemberton Papers, HSP; Thayer, *Israel Pemberton*, p. 230.

Amidst bad roads and good weather, the four intrepid women journeyed on to the home of James Vaux, another Quaker living on the Schuylkill, where they spent the second night. After three days of traveling along rutted, muddy roads, some of "ye worst . . . we have yet met with", and fording three large streams, "which came into ye Carriage and wet our Feet, and frightened more than one of us," the weary party arrived in Lancaster, the temporary state capital.⁸³ On 9 April, the ladies were allowed only a brief, half-hour visit with Wharton and the other council members. They said disappointingly little, but the Quakeresses were assisted the next day by Timothy Matlack,⁸⁴ the council's Secretary, who accepted their petition and gave them joyous news—the council had decided the previous day to release all of the prisoners!⁸⁵ Congress had steadfastly refused to claim the prisoners, and the Pennsylvania Assembly, as well as Generals Washington and Gates, had advised the Executive Council to release the exiles, which they finally agreed to do, even though the council still regarded most Quakers as pro-British.⁸⁶

The party was delayed another four days, however, while an agent who had taken the test oath was sought to inform the prisoners of their new freedom. John Musser, a Mennonite who had taken the test, offered his services, but could not leave until Sunday, 13 April. Arrangements then had to be made to transport the prisoners themselves from Winchester to Lancaster.⁸⁷

On Monday, 14 April, the ladies, while anxiously awaiting the arrival of their relatives and friends, were afforded the opportunity of meeting with other civilian and military leaders of the Revolution. All of these individuals had long regarded the Quakers with

83. Drinker, *Journal*, pp. 93–94; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, pp. 93–94.

84. *Ibid.*, pp. 94–95. Timothy Matlack, another ex-Quaker, was one of the three co-founders of the rival (and ephemeral), nonpacifist Free Quaker Meeting in 1781. Philadelphia Monthly Meeting Minutes (1765, 1776–1779), p. 9, Swarthmore; Charles Wetherill, *History of the Free Quakers* (Philadelphia: By the Author, 1894), pp. 15–16, 18–19.

85. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 95; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 95.

86. Timothy Matlack to James Pemberton, 10 April 1778, Drinker Correspondence, Haverford; Orders of the Supreme Executive Council, Pemberton Papers, HSP, XXXII:29, 48; Elizabeth Drinker to Henry Drinker, 10 April 1778, Drinker Correspondence, HSP; Elizabeth Drinker to Friends in Philadelphia, 10 April 1778, *loc. cit.*; Henry Drinker to Elizabeth Drinker, 14 April 1778, *loc. cit.*; Thayer, *Israel Pemberton*, pp. 230–231.

87. Drinker, *Journal*, pp. 95–96; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, pp. 95–96; Henry Drinker to Elizabeth Drinker, 14 April 1778, Drinker Correspondence, HSP; Pemberton Papers, HSP, XXXI:181; Thayer, *Israel Pemberton*, pp. 230–231.

suspicion, and some of the Pennsylvanians had been responsible for prolonging the exiles' trying captivity in Virginia. Consequently, the meeting, though brief, must have been strained. The Quakeresses met again with several members of the Executive Council, including Joseph Reed, formerly military secretary to Washington at Cambridge, Adjutant General of the Continental Army, and a member of the Continental Congress,⁸⁸ and Thomas McKean, a lawyer involved in Pennsylvania politics for over twenty-three years, and formerly President of the Revolutionary Provincial Convention.⁸⁹ "They appeared kind," Elizabeth tersely noted, but feared that it was only "from the teeth outwards." They also conversed with General Greene, Colonel Clement Biddle, and several others who "made a show of favor."⁹⁰ Both Clement and his older brother, Owen, were then serving under Greene, in charge of the Forage Department. Like their superior, they had been Quakers, disowned by their meeting early in the Revolution for bearing arms. The Biddles were also members of a prominent, old Quaker family in Philadelphia. That fact, and the presence of these other ex-Quaker, revolutionary officials must have been a painful reminder of the severe schism that the conflict had engendered within the Society of Friends.⁹¹ No further recorded observations of these gentlemen were made by Mrs. Drinker. The day concluded with the ladies having to journey over "roads so bad" that they "walked part of ye way, and climbed 3 fences, to get clear of ye mud."⁹²

The exiles did not begin to arrive in Lancaster until 24 April, but were preceded four days before by their letters, describing themselves, to the delegation's relief, as "generally well,"⁹³ being pleasantly surprised at the news of their release, and at their cordial reception by congressmen at York.⁹⁴ James Pemberton and Samuel Pleasants, apparently in better physical condition, were the first

88. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 97; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 97; John F. Roche, *Joseph Reed, a Moderate in the American Revolution* (New York: AMS Press, 1968).

89. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 97; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 97; Joseph E. Illick, *Colonial Pennsylvania, A History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976), pp. 303, 313, 315.

90. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 97; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 97.

91. Monthly Meeting Minutes: Philadelphia (1771-1777), pp. 335, 351, (1782, 1789), p. 85, Swarthmore; Radbill, "Quaker Patriots", pp. 47-54.

92. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 97; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 97.

93. *Ibid.*, pp. 98-99; Henry Drinker to Elizabeth Drinker, 16 April 1778, Drinker Correspondence, HSP.

94. Pemberton Papers, HSP, XXXII:75; Thayer, *Israel Pemberton*, p. 231.

to arrive. Elizabeth did not expect her husband that day, since friends had cautioned her that he was still weak from his recent illness and "not able to travel so fast as some others at present." The reunited friends "sat chattering together 'till after 10 o'clock" in the evening.⁹⁵

Henry finally arrived in Lancaster the next day with the rest of the exiles, and reached the home of James Webb "about one o'clock," just in time to dine with Elizabeth and her companions. She was pleased to find him "much heartier" than she had expected, and looked "fat and well." The Drinkers were reunited at last. The enlarged party began their return journey to Philadelphia on the morning of 28 April, arriving there two days later. We "found our dear Families all well," Elizabeth declared, "for which favor and Blessing, and the restoration of my dear Husband, may I ever be thankful."⁹⁶

Soon after the Drinkers' return, the British forces began preparations to evacuate the city, but not before Mrs. Drinker was able to catch glimpses of the famed "Meschianza," an elaborate, lavish medieval-style celebration held in honor of Howe's departure for England. After noting "these scenes of folly and vanity," she indignantly declared: "How insensible do these people appear, while our land is so greatly desolated, and Death and sore destruction has overtaken . . . so many!"⁹⁷

The evacuation began in earnest on the morning of 9 June, snuffing out the last, ephemeral hopes of loyalists that the British would yet remain in Philadelphia. Shortly after one o'clock, Major Crammond, "very dull at taking leave," departed with his regiment.⁹⁸ Crammond apparently left on good terms with the Drinkers, since he corresponded with them intermittently until his death in New York City, by an unknown disease, a few weeks after the decisive British defeat at Yorktown.⁹⁹ Meanwhile, Henry had been busy that week with a committee to dispose of a newly arrived cargo of provisions intended for the city's needy.¹⁰⁰

95. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 100; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 100.

96. *Ibid.*, pp. 100-101.

97. *Ibid.*, pp. 102-103; Gruber, *Howe Brothers*, pp. 298-299. A detailed description of this lavish celebration is given in Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1:377-381.

98. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 105; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 105; Gruber, *Howe Brothers*, pp. 301-302; Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1:383-384.

99. Drinker, *Journal*, pp. 113, 135, 136; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, pp. 113, 135, 136.

100. *Ibid.*, p. 105.

For the next eight days, the Drinkers and other Philadelphians observed the systematic withdrawal of His Majesty's forces, encumbered by thousands of frightened tory refugees, some of whom were the Drinkers' friends and neighbors, who choked the New Jersey roads and impeded the retreat of the hot and dispirited troops. When the Drinkers arose on the morning of 18 June, "there was not a Red-Coat to be seen in Town, and ye encampment in the Jerseys" had "also vanished." The British rear guard "had not been gone a quarter of an hour before ye American Light-Horse entered ye city." Although there were few of them, "they were in and out all day", and "had drawn swords in their Hands;" and "galloped about ye streets in a great hurry. Many were much frightened at their appearance." That evening, the rebels imposed a military curfew, "and . . . any . . . found in ye street by ye Patrole [sic]," would be punished.¹⁰¹

"Ye English have in reality left us," Elizabeth declared the next day, "and the other party have taken possession." "They have been coming in . . . all day," along with "ye old inhabitants, part of ye artillery, and some soldiers." Washington had not yet arrived and was rumored to be elsewhere.¹⁰² He had broken camp at Valley Forge that very day, and was in hot pursuit of Clinton's forces.¹⁰³ The rebel authorities ordered the closing of all stores on 22 June, amidst an almost total eclipse of the sun, and storekeepers were told "to render an account of their goods." Two days later, Mrs. Drinker reported that since dealers were forbidden to sell their goods, it was "almost impossible to get anything." There had been "a very plentiful market" that morning, but because "ye country people" could no longer exchange their raw produce for finished goods, it was feared that such markets would soon close.¹⁰⁴

News of the Battle of Monmouth reached the city on the last day of June. It was reported that "great numbers of ye British

101. Ibid., pp. 105-106; Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1:384-385; Gruber, *Howe Brothers*, pp. 301-302.

102. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 106; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 106.

103. Flexner, *Washington*, pp. 296-299.

104. Drinker, *Journal*, pp. 106-107; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, pp. 106-107. On June fourth, Congress had ordered Washington to preserve order in Philadelphia, and to prevent the sale, removal, or transfer of British goods. The order was carried out fifteen days later, but, fortunately, the markets were soon reopened. Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1:385-386.

troops were slain and taken.”¹⁰⁵ Washington had overtaken Clinton’s army near Monmouth Courthouse in New Jersey on 28 June, and fought a fierce but inconclusive battle, the last major engagement in the North.¹⁰⁶ The first week of July proved to be hot and tumultuous. On 2 July, while the thermometer soared into the nineties, Congress returned to Philadelphia amidst loud cannon fire to mark the occasion. A far greater commotion was raised two days later as the second anniversary of Independence was observed. That evening, the “firing of Guns, Sky-Rockets &c.” put out most of the Drinkers’ windows. The return of the revolutionaries was obviously not restoring peace and tranquility to their household.¹⁰⁷

Although the worst of the Drinkers’ trials, the long, involuntary absence of the head of the household, and the privations of British occupation, had ended, additional tensions, chronic family illnesses, and harsh conditions imposed by a young nation at war, continued to plague the pacifist family. Economic and psychological hardships, caused by heavy taxes and fines, confiscations, a general scarcity of all kinds of goods, rapidly depreciating currency, arrests of friends and neighbors, two of whom were hung for treason, chronic charges of disloyalty, and general harassment by revolutionary authorities and a hostile citizenry continued through 1781.¹⁰⁸

One shameful example of overt physical abuse of Quakers took place in October, 1781. On the twenty-fourth of that month, a large number of citizens engaged in a wild celebration at the news of Cornwallis’ surrender at Yorktown one week earlier, and decided to chastise those who did not participate. Members of the Society of Friends were prime targets, and the Drinkers unfortunately bore the brunt of the crowd’s wrath:

“A mob assembled about 7 o’clock . . .,” Elizabeth recounted, “and continued their insults until near 10½ to those whose houses were not illuminated. Scarcely one Friend’s House escaped. We

105. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 107; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 107.

106. Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1:388; Flexner, *Washington*, pp. 302–316; Gruber, *Howe Brothers*, p. 305.

107. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 107; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 107.

108. *Ibid.*, pp. 109, 111, 112, 117–125, 127–130, 133–135, 137; Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1:394–401, 408, 411, 416–417; Rufus M. Jones, *The Quakers in the American Colonies* (New York: Russell and Russell, Inc., 1962), pp. 567–568. Jones claims that Quakers continued to suffer losses for some time after the war, “probably ’till about 1787,” (p. 568), but cites no specific evidence.

had nearly 70 panes of glass broken; ye sash lights and two panels of the front Parlor broke [sic] in pieces—ye Door cracked and violently burst open; when they threw stones into ye House for some time, but did not enter. Some fared better and some worse," she added. After breaking down the doors of some houses, "they entered, and destroyed the Furniture &c. Many women and children were frightened into fits, and 'tis a mercy no lives were lost." Mrs. Drinker, who was still recovering from an unidentified, lingering illness of several months' duration, must have suffered greatly.¹⁰⁹

Despite such formidable hardships, however, including the failure of the shipping firm of James and Drinker in 1781, due to the heavy debts incurred by Abel James, Elizabeth Drinker's journal suggests a family who emerged from the revolutionary conflict in reasonably good health and on a surprisingly firm economic footing.¹¹⁰ Such could not be said of such co-religionists as the formerly wealthy, prominent, and influential Israel Pemberton, who lost his courageous, though frail, wife in October 1778, his numerous businesses, most of his estates, and who saw his youngest son slowly succumb to a painful, fatal disease, all in rapid succession. Pemberton, who never regained his health after his release from captivity, died in April, 1779, soon after sustaining these staggering tragedies.¹¹¹ In fact, many other Quakers suffered numerous misfortunes, ranging from fines and taxes to outright confiscations, imprisonment, permanent exile, and in a few cases, death.¹¹²

109. Drinker, *Journal*, p. 137; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, p. 137; Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1:416. Scharf and Westcott recorded the celebration of the event, but not the harassment of Quakers; Jones, *Quakers in the American Colonies*, p. 568.

110. Mrs. Drinker made numerous references, both during and after the Revolution, to real and personal property, servants, and other material advantages. Drinker, *Journal*, pp. 57–59, 62–66, 71, 77, 79, 81, 83, 109, 111, 113, 116–117, 120–122, 124–125, 129, 137–138, 140, 144–145, 147, 151; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, pp. 57–59, 62–66, 69, 71, 77, 79, 81, 83, 109, 111, 113, 116–117, 120–122, 124–125, 129, 137–138, 140, 144–145, 147, 151. Additional evidence of material prosperity was noted in the business correspondence between Henry Drinker and his partner, Abel James. Drinker-James Correspondence, HSP.

111. Drinker, *Journal*, pp. 111, 115; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, pp. 111, 115; Pemberton Papers, HSP, XXXII:124; Thayer, *Israel Pemberton*, p. 232.

112. Drinker, *Journal*, pp. 48, 51, 54, 57, 59–62, 70, 72–73, 76, 83, 87, 91, 104–109, 116–119, 137; Biddle, ed., *Extracts*, pp. 48, 51, 54, 57, 59–62, 70, 72–73, 76, 83, 87, 91, 104–109, 116–119, 137. For a systematic analysis of Quaker sufferings during the Revolution, see Arthur J. McKeel, "Quakers in the American Revolution" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1939).

Yet the Drinkers' relatively advantageous situation at the end of the war could not be attributed solely to good fortune, although this may well have been a significant factor. The mutual assistance practiced by the Society of Friends also could have helped the Drinkers, although the same aid was given to other Quaker families with far less beneficial results. Rather, it would seem that the apparent closeness and comforting warmth of the Drinker family itself, together with the relatively moderate approach of Henry Drinker in dealing with the revolutionary authorities compared with the more forthright, outspoken, persistent, and aggressive methods of Israel Pemberton,¹¹³ played a far greater role in helping the Drinkers through a succession of potentially overwhelming crises. Finally, the most significant factor of all, was probably Mrs. Drinker herself. Elizabeth's calm, orderly mind, her constructive and fair attitude towards family, friends, neighbors, and strangers alike, coupled with her indomitable courage and perseverance, guided the entire family through trying, chaotic times, refusing to succumb to fear, hatred, or despair. In short, the journal of Elizabeth Drinker reveals, not only a vivid, yet admirably impartial glimpse of troubled and momentous times, but an arresting portrait of a remarkable individual as well.

113. See Pemberton Papers, HSP; Drinker Correspondence, HSP and Haverford.