

ALAN CAMERON, A SCOTCH LOYALIST IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

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LATE in November of the year 1775, a few miles north of Hagerstown, Maryland, three traveling gentlemen were arrested on suspicion of being Loyalists. These men, Alan Cameron, Dr. John Ferdinand Dalziel Smyth, and Dr. John Connolly, were promptly brought before the local Committee of Safety of Frederick County, which sat at Frederick Town, and "examinations were taken."

Alan Cameron, the subject of this narration, was born in 1753 in Errach, Invernessshire, Scotland, and was the head of a branch of the great clan Cameron. In his early years he had won athletic reputation in his native glens and at an early age had made his way to the American colonies of England. According to his testimony before the Committee, Alan Cameron said he had left Scotland because of an affair of honor and had come to Virginia with the purpose of purchasing lands in the back country, and intended to go to Henderson for that purpose. But due to conditions prevailing at that time (Nov., 1775) he had found it difficult to pass through the "Back Country."² He further testified that, in the course of his sojourn in Virginia, he had met Lord Dunmore, governor of the Virginia colony, who had persuaded him, with the promise of advancement, "to accept a Commission as first Lieutenant in a Regiment to be raised by Lieutenant Colonel (John) Connolly."³

As might have been expected of one who was fast becoming a staunch Loyalist, Alan Cameron did not tell the whole truth before this committee. In fact, his testimony revealed very little information concerning his political and other activities up to this time. Alan Cameron really had come to Virginia from South

¹ *Pennsylvania Archives*, 1st Series, IV (Philadelphia, 1852), 682.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

Carolina, where he had learned much about Indians and Indian affairs during his service as an agent under the Honourable John Stuart, who was superintendent general of the Department of the South in charge of Indian supervision.⁴ While in South Carolina, Cameron had suffered much abuse for his unshaken loyalty to Great Britain, induced in part because he had refused with disdain offers of military rank in South Carolina's provincial forces. As a matter of fact, on Sunday, June 18th, 1775, Alan Cameron had been voted a commission as first lieutenant in the Regiment of Rangers by the Council of Safety for the Province of South Carolina.⁵ When informed of this action by Major Andrew Williamson, Cameron wrote the following reply: "You are pleased to mention [that the offer of the commission] was in consequence of a conversation that passed between you and I at Lockaber . . . ; we might have spoken something of the difference at present subsisting between Great Britain and her Colonies, and possible I said that I was but a single man and did not care which way the wind blew, that my baggage was but light to carry.

"Certainly, sir, you could never infer from these words or any other on my side, that I would accept a commission in the Provincials; if you did, it really was not my sentiment; at the same time, sir, if I had been disposed for military service, and to join your side of the question (which I can never think of), a lieutenancy upon such temporary footing would not suit me."⁶

In spite of this firm refusal, Major Williamson sent the commission to Cameron, which provoked another and more adamant refusal. "Give me leave to tell you," Cameron wrote, "that I never gave you the least hint that I would accept a commission on your side of the question; . . . I'm sure I did not say one word that you could infer from, that I would join the cause you all *unluckily* at present contend for. I always was and still am pos-

⁴ John Connolly. "A Narration of the Transactions Imprisonment, and Sufferings of John Connolly, An American Loyalist and Lieutenant Colonel in His Majesty's Service," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XII (1888), 412.

⁵ "Journal of the Council of Safety for the Province of South Carolina, 1775," *Collections of South Carolina Historical Society*, II (Charleston, 1858), 24.

⁶ Cameron to Major Andrew Williamson, July 10, 1775. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

sessed of different sentiments, and ways of thinking . . . I have returned the commission which you will find enclosed.”⁷

And so, with this final refusal to aid in an unlucky and temporary cause, Alan Cameron had left South Carolina for Virginia. He brought along dispatches from Governor Lord William Campbell of South Carolina, Tonym of East Florida, and John Stuart. Cameron's real intention was to serve in a corps of Highland emigrants, which was then being recruited at Boston. His loyalty, courage, and good conduct were so well established that his reputation in these respects had preceded him. So impressed by him was Lord Dunmore, the loyalist governor of Virginia, that he thought Cameron would be a proper person to accompany John Connolly, Dunmore's ally, in his projected Loyalist activities. Accordingly, Dunmore commissioned Cameron a lieutenant, leaving it to Connolly to advance him to command of a company if and when the corps had been recruited, “which from experience I afterwards had of his worth and estimable qualities,” Connolly later said, “I certainly should have done.”⁸

This John Connolly with whom Alan Cameron had agreed to begin more vigorously his Loyalist activities and also a long military career, was actively associated with Loyalist activities on the upper Ohio river. When Toryism or Loyalism first became active in Pennsylvania, it was among the frontiersmen of Western Pennsylvania rather than in other parts of that Colony. Such activity had been occasioned in the early seventeen hundred seventies when Lord Dunmore, Governor of Virginia, attempted to settle the boundary dispute between Virginia and Pennsylvania by taking possession of Fort Pitt by force.⁹

Lord Dunmore's agent was Dr. John Connolly who acted in the capacity of captain commandant of militia in the region concerned. With eighty of his men Connolly seized the fort late in January, 1774. The name was changed to Fort Dunmore and the surrounding district was set up as a new county. Thus was the

⁷ July 19, 1775. *Ibid.*, p. 67; James Mayson to William Thomson, July 18, 1775. *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, I (1900), 47.

⁸ *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XII (1888), 412.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 311-324, 407-411; Wilbur H. Siebert, *Loyalists of Pennsylvania* (Columbus, 1920), p. 9.

authority of Pennsylvania supplanted or usurped on the upper Ohio.

In June of 1775, Connolly held an Indian council at Fort Dunmore, in keeping with the program of the governor of Virginia to secure the aid of the redmen for the King. He succeeded. Then he brought together a group of friends, with whom he entered into secret agreement to assist in restoring constitutional government, if he could obtain the necessary authority to enlist the men. Thereby, it seems clear that Connolly and his followers were determined to offer armed resistance, if they could, to the revolutionary party which was then in control of the colonial government.

Before he set out for Virginia, the 20th of July, 1775, Connolly disbanded the garrison of Fort Dunmore because of the numerous friends of the American cause on the upper Ohio. When he reached Virginia, Governor Dunmore was a refugee on board a British man-of-war at Norfolk. So Connolly set out for Boston to lay his plan before General Gage. The plan was to obtain cooperation of the whites and Indians from the royal post at Detroit and garrison from Fort Gage on the Illinois to form an expedition against the upper Ohio. Here he would enlist a battalion of Loyalists, and obtain support of the neighboring Indians. With these combined forces, he would seize or destroy Forts Pitt and Fincastle and join forces with Lord Dunmore at Alexandria. Thus, the southern colonies would be severed from the northern and the success of the royal cause in the south assured.¹⁰ To this enterprise Alan Cameron gave his approval and with John Connolly cast his lot as a Loyalist.

In the early fall of 1775, Connolly returned from Boston to Virginia. He received a commission from Lord Dunmore as lieutenant-colonel commandant, and when he set out for Detroit in the night of the 13th of November, 1775, Alan Cameron with another Loyalist, Dr. John Ferdinand Dalziel Smyth, accompanied him.¹¹ Cameron and his companions embarked on this unfortunate journey on board a flat-bottomed decked schooner, with their horses and only one servant who belonged to Colonel Connolly.

¹⁰ John F. D. Smyth, *A Tour in the United States of America* (London, 1784), II, 243-247; Wilbur H. Siebert, *Loyalists of Pennsylvania*, p. 10.

¹¹ *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XII (1888), 412.

The plan was to proceed up the Chesapeake, into the Potomac River, intending to land on the Maryland side near Dr. Smyth's house on Port Tobacco Creek. From there the journey was to be continued on horseback through the country; by a feint, the three Loyalists would leave the Pittsburgh road and take a private route to a place called Standing Stone, which was beyond the influence of county committees, and whence to Detroit was not more than a journey of seven days.¹²

Alan Cameron and his companions had sailed up the Potomac almost as far as Lower Cedar Point, when a violent gale from the northwest obliged them to stand down the river again, and drove the schooner up the St. Mary's River into Maryland. A landing was made and the group took the road like ordinary travelers without occasioning the least suspicion. Dr. Smyth acted as guide through this country for more than two hundred miles, since he had resided as a gentleman in Maryland, and was intimately acquainted with the lower parts of the province. Danger of detection was great in this section where Dr. Smyth and his political principles were so well known.

These Loyalists were able to continue their journey without molestation or incident until they reached Frederick Town, on the eve of a general muster, or field day of the armed associators. At the inn where Alan Cameron and his companions stopped, suspicions, which could be aroused quite easily under the existing circumstances, were occasioned when each of the three travelers called for something different to drink from the others present. The result of these suspicions was a proposal to bring the three strangers before the County Committee in the morning for examination.¹³ Fortunately for the Loyalists, however, they were able to set out from Frederick Town in the morning at daybreak; the Committee had all become intoxicated over night and by the time they arose the next day and their heads had cleared sufficiently to recollect any circumstances concerning the suspects, it was too late to send anyone in pursuit.

By the evening of that day, the 19th of November, Cameron and his companions were "on the very border of the frontier, and

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 413; John F. D. Smyth, *Tour in the United States*, II, 245.

¹³ John F. D. Smyth, *Tour in the United States*, II, 249-250. Frederick Town was the center of an important German district.

almost out of danger."¹⁴ They had reached a public house about five miles beyond Hagerstown, the landlord of which was Dr. Snayvelley, a German, who was a friend of Dr. Connolly. However, a short time before arriving at this inn, the three Loyalists had chanced to meet a young man, a hatter by trade, who formerly had been a private under Connolly's command at Pittsburgh and who saluted Connolly with the title of Major as he passed.

Alan Cameron and Dr. Smyth, made uneasy by this circumstance, were apprehensive of being discovered; they proposed either changing their route or having the fellow secured. On the latter proposal, Connolly thought that any act of violence used upon this man would likely produce rather than avoid the results that were feared and, as circumstances stood, there would be no real danger.¹⁵

However, about ten o'clock that same night the hatter, arriving at a beer house in Hagerstown, happened to mingle with some officers of the Minute Men among whom some one inquired about the identity of the three strange gentlemen who had passed through the town in the evening. Thereupon, the hatter offered the information that one of them was Major Connolly. Unfortunately for the three strange gentlemen, only two days before, the colonel of these Minute Men had discussed Connolly's Tory principles with the officers. These officers in the beer house immediately notified the colonel of the probable whereabouts of Connolly and the other two gentlemen. Immediately a body of men was sent after the trio, to compel them to return to be examined before the Committee at Hagerstown.

Sometime between midnight and two o'clock in the morning, a company of rifle men rushed into the room at Snayvelley's inn, which Cameron and his companions occupied, and with cocked rifles placed close to the heads of the suspects while in bed, put them under arrest. This party of riflemen numbered thirty-six, exclusive of the officers, and, according to Dr. Smyth, "consisted solely of rude unfeeling German ruffians, fit for assassinations, murder, and death," who treated the suspects "with great ignominy and insult" and abused them continually "with every opprobrious epithet language can afford."¹⁶

¹⁴ *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XII (1888), 413.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*; John F. D. Smyth, *Tour in the United States*, II, p. 251.

¹⁶ John F. D. Smyth, *Tour in the United States*, II, 253.

The prisoners were carried to Hagerstown where Cameron, Smyth and Connolly were each examined separately before the Committee; a search was made for papers; the saddles and baggage were subjected to a strict scrutiny, but nothing involving the suspects was found. After the examinations, the prisoners were kept in separate houses during the next day and night "and [as Connolly said] suffered that kind of disturbance and abuse which might be expected from undisciplined soldiers, and a clamorous rabble, at such a crisis."¹⁷

The Committee at Hagerstown, unable to find any charge on which the prisoners could be held, ordered them to be taken before the Committee at Frederick Town for further examination. There each prisoner was stripped, searched, and examined separately. These examinations were so complete that the saddles were taken to pieces, the stuffing was taken out, and the soles of the prisoners' boots were ripped open. But nothing was found; the papers that were being sought so diligently were concealed carefully in the sticks of the servant's mail pillion, on which the servant carried Connolly's portmanteau. These papers were the necessary ones from General Gage and Lord Dunmore. The pillion sticks, under the inspection of Lord Dunmore, had been made hollow for that purpose and covered with tin plates, and then canvas had been glued on them as usual; "this was so dextrously and completely executed that it could not be discovered on the strictest examination."¹⁸ These papers were not discovered by the Committee, and it seemed as if the prisoners could not be justly held.

The Committee at Frederick Town, during these examinations, was presided over by John Hanson. A few days after Cameron and his companions had been taken to Frederick Town, there arrived at the Committee "one of the most illiberal, inveterate and violent rebels [so Smyth felt] named Samuel Chase," the son of a respectable clergyman, a lawyer, and a "member of the Congress."¹⁹ He demanded a fresh examination of the prisoners. Unfortunately for Cameron and the others, a manuscript containing some propositions of Connolly's had been used for wrapping

¹⁷ *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XII (1888), 414.

¹⁸ John F. D. Smyth, *Tour in the United States*, II, 248.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, II, 254.

around a stick of black ball in Connolly's portmanteau. Old and torn, the paper was discovered in consequence of the new examination.

Connolly thereupon acknowledged the commissions of Alan Cameron, Dr. Smyth and himself, and the three men became supposedly dangerous prisoners. Accordingly, the three Loyalists were put under strong guard in the house of Charles Beatty, the colonel of the Minute Men, confined together in a third story room, with the windows screwed down, denied the use of pen, ink, and paper and held *incommunicado*, with no reason, however, to complain of the lodging or diet.²⁰ Thus confined, Cameron and his confederates remained for seven weeks, and it began to appear that Alan Cameron's career as a Loyalist was threatened with extinction almost ere it had begun.

In the meantime, with such damning evidence against Cameron and the others, the Committee of Frederick County asked the Continental Congress what disposition to make of the prisoners. John Hancock, President of Congress, requested that the prisoners be sent under guard to Philadelphia with copies of the examinations and any important papers found upon them. John Hanson, Jr., chairman, gave assurance that "the Committee and Inhabitants of Frederick County were determined to pursue every measure which the Congress [might] recommend to them, as necessary for the preservation of these Colonies at this time of Imminent Danger."²¹ These instructions from Congress were received on December thirteenth, 1775.

On the journey to Philadelphia Cameron and Connolly²² were escorted by a party of militia dragoons. The prisoners' spurs were removed and their horses were placed as a team of coach horses with their heads tied together, while a horseman, with a rope attached to that which secured the team, rode ahead, "rudely conducting us in whatever direction he thought proper." Connolly's servant was allowed to follow with the portmanteau, but when it was noticed that his spurs had not been taken off, the

²⁰ *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XII (1888), 416.

²¹ *Pennsylvania Archives*, 1st Series, IV, 681-682.

²² Dr. Smyth had escaped with letters to Connolly's wife and Alexander McKee at Pittsburgh; was captured by a party from Fort Pitt, Jan. 12, 1775, and arrived in Philadelphia a prisoner, Jan. 18, 1776.

crowd of curious rushed up and cutting through his boots and stockings, tore them away.²³

A large part of the journey was covered the first day in spite of bad traveling conditions. The road was rough, snow covered the ground, and numerous small streams, frozen over, had to be crossed on ice that constantly broke through with the horses. The discomfort of Cameron and Connolly was great, which led the latter to note that "for the honor of humanity, . . . it should be observed, that our guard consisted of the lowest and most irrational of the inhabitants, in and near the town of Frederick, and their captain a common surgeon-barber."²⁴

On the second day of the journey the town of York in Pennsylvania was reached and Cameron and Connolly were committed to the county jail, and placed in a room, provided with a dirty straw bed, with little covering, and, in spite of the cold of that season, no fire. But Cameron and Connolly should have been able to forget their discomfort. The patriotic and martial spirit among these new-made soldiers on guard was running so high, that all night they entertained themselves with music with the fife and the drum.

The next morning, which was January 1, 1776, under an officer's guard, with the accompaniment of a drum sounding the notes of "the rogue's march," the prisoners were taken to the tavern where the horses had been kept. Here, the prisoners amid wishes of a happy new year were consigned again to the soldiers from Frederick Town. As the soldiers and their charges left the town, great numbers of inhabitants rode along to Wrights Ferry,²⁵ on the west bank of the Susquehanna. Both men and horses crossed the stream by walking on the ice.

That night Cameron and Connolly were lodged in the jail at Lancaster and a journey of two more days brought them to Philadelphia. Here they were committed to the charge of the associated city militia, all dressed up in uniform. About six o'clock in the evening of the same day by an order from the Committee of Safety, Cameron and Connolly were marched to the place where

²³ *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XII (1888), 417.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 418.

²⁵ Connolly was a native of Lancaster county (on east side of the Susquehanna) and his twin brother lived at Wrights Ferry.

the Committee sat. By order of the Committee, the prisoners were confined to jail and charged "with treasonable Practices against America."²⁶ The keeper of the "Gaol of the City of Philadelphia" was charged to "keep them safely," so the order read, "without Pen Ink or paper, and from all intercourse with other persons, until discharged by this Board or the orders of the Continental Congress, In which this shall be your sufficient warrant."²⁷ On the twenty-ninth of this same month, Cameron was brought before the Committee of Safety again and "being examined, and found to have acted an inimical part in the present dispute between Great Britain and these Colonies, was remanded to Gaol, & there to remain 'till the further order of Congress and this Board."²⁸ Up to this time, the question might have arisen whether Alan Cameron had cast his lot with Lord Dunmore and John Connolly's scheme merely as an opportunist or adventurer or whether he was actually moved by Loyalist sentiment. Circumstances to date had not altered Cameron's stand nor had he altered his attitude by May 13, 1776, when he spoke for himself in a letter to James Duane, in which Cameron asked that gentleman's aid in securing his "enlargement" from prison. "In my letter to the Gentlemen of Congress I was very explicit and indeed I imagined that my candor would have met with a suitable reception, however abnoxious a man's political sentiments, when acting from principle, might render him to those possessed of opposite ones; I should be very sorry it would destroy that humanity which distinguishes true magnanimity."²⁹

Cameron, Connolly, and the servant were jailed together in a dirty room and the only comfort or convenience to be obtained was an old pair of blankets and that only after payment of a considerable premium to the jailer. In this manner in the depth of winter, these prisoners were held for ten days. Finally, more pecuniary influence with the jailer induced him to produce something that could be called a bed. How badly and inhumanely prisoners were treated at this time may be somewhat evident from the conditions just narrated. But Dr. Smyth, describing his experiences in jail when he was confined a fortnight later (Jan. 18, 1776), gives

²⁶ *Pennsylvania Colonial Records* (Philadelphia, 1852), X, 444.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 445.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 470.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, III, 39.

added facts of much significance.³⁰ He said he was "thrown into a cold damp vaulted room, or cell, in the criminal apartment for females, wherein at that time more than seventy were confined . . . without a chair, table, bed, blanket, or straw, and obliged to lie on the bare floor, with a log of wood under my head; in the midst of a most severe winter, without a spark of fire, and the isicles [*sic*] impending from the arch roof. . . ."³¹

Whether the above statements can be accepted completely or not, Alan Cameron's prison experiences in Philadelphia were characterized by much inhumanity. These experiences began in the old prison on Third and High (Market) Streets, which had been provided for by an Act of Assembly on February 27, 1718. "When finished about the year 1723, the pile consisted of a two story stone building, fronting on High [street], for the debtors jail, and another two story similar building fronting on Third Street, for the criminals, called the workhouse—the latter some distance from the former, but joined to it by a high wall forming a part of the yard enclosure. The buildings were of hewn stone; half the cellar story was above ground; the roofs were sharply pitched, and the garrets furnished rooms for prisoners."³² A feature, totally out of keeping with modern penal institutions, provided by this first prison within its precincts, was a tavern.

The dungeons underneath this old jail are still to be found under the present building that occupies the same site at Third and Market Streets. Four of these are visible. The largest pit was about fifteen by forty feet and was lined with stone faced with brick. The other pits were about fifteen feet square. Among the objects found in these dungeons were leg chains, ankle chains and irons, a number of which were fastened to the walls.

Before the end of January, 1776, Alan Cameron with others was transferred from this prison to a "new and elegant prison," so it was described, whither they were "escorted with great formality and again honored with the rogue's march."³³ The new jail had been ordered for the county and city of Philadelphia in 1773, and was financed by a special issue of paper currency, each

³⁰ It is very likely that Dr. Smyth was confined from the first in the historic Walnut St. jail.

³¹ John F. D. Smyth, *Tour in the United States*, II, 282.

³² John F. Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1830), pp. 304-305.

³³ *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XII (1888), 420.

note of which contained a picture of the jail. This jail, known as the historic Walnut Street jail, was only partly completed in 1776, at which time the completed portion was turned over to Congress as a military prison. Here Alan Cameron was imprisoned until near the time the British troops took possession of Philadelphia.

Of the conditions of his imprisonment, Alan Cameron complained greatly. He wrote in a letter to James Duane, "I am close shut up day and night within a damp vaulted room, even our window sashes nailed down; by these means my health is impaired in so much that I'm frequently seized with violent fits of sickness, which I'm apprehensive will in a short time prove fatal to me in their consequences; Doctor Cadwallader was kind enough to visit me yesterday and this morning (May 12th and 13th, 1776), but he rapidly perceives the inefficacy of medicine without a fresh air which I have not breathed for upwards of the last six months, excepting when coming from Frederick Town in Maryland to this City."³⁴ Cameron's complaints finally reached Congress, and from a letter written by Cameron a short time afterward it is evident that some relief from these conditions was obtained. Congress, induced by the injury to the health of young Cameron caused by his long and close confinement, allowed him to walk "two hours daily for the benefit of exercise" and at the same time referred Cameron to the Committee of Safety in case he "had any further application to make."³⁵

Such an application he did make to the Committee of Safety—"a parole I ever expected as due to my unfortunate condition, and such you [Committee of Safety] might be assured would be sufficiently obligatory upon me. If judged otherwise, I request the favour of being permitted to go into the room with Gen'l McDonald,³⁶ and some other of my acquaintances, with whom I think the time would pass more agreeable, and consequently make life somewhat more comfortable."³⁷ The Committee of Safety obliged

³⁴ *Pennsylvania Colonial Records*, III, 39; John F. D. Smyth, *Tour in the United States*, II, p. 291.

³⁵ Letter to the Gentlemen of the Committee, Philadelphia, *Pennsylvania Archives*, 2nd Series I, 446.

³⁶ Loyalist prisoner from South Carolina. Prisoners were locked in groups of twenty to fifty persons in large rooms, twenty feet long by eighteen feet wide. There were eight of these rooms in the Walnut St. jail.

³⁷ Letter, June 6, 1776, *Pennsylvania Archives*, 2nd Series (Harrisburg, 1874), I, 446.

him with the "latter,"³⁸ provided it was agreeable with Gen'l McDonald. However, since Congress had offered Dr. Smyth a parole and was to grant one to Connolly later, it is strange that a parole was not given Cameron as he had requested, Burlington or any other place to the northward being the place which he suggested. As seems to have been the custom of Congress at this time, numerous Loyalists were granted paroles upon signing necessary pledges. John Connolly was paroled more than once, even after a previous parole had been broken. But in the case of Cameron the minutes of the Committee of Safety give no reason at all for a refusal.

This action of the Committee, stated above, was made known to Alan Cameron two days later (June 8th) through Thomas Dewees, the keeper of the jail. The news was agreeable and Cameron was grateful to the Committee, but what good could come of this action as long as Cameron had to put up with Dewees?³⁹ Before the latter allowed Cameron to leave the basement part of the prison to "go up stairs" to the room where Gen'l McDonald was, Dewees presented his bill for food, fire, candles, wine, and punch as follows:

"(No. 3) Mr. Cameron,	
To Thos. Dewees, Dr.	
To your diet from the 28th April, to the 8th	
June, 5 weeks and 6 days	£2 17 6
To fire and candles, 15/; 1 bottle wine, 6/;	
punch, 7/	1 3 0

	4 0 6

Mr. Cameron: I shall expect you'll pay off the Bill before you go upstairs, as it is a separate accompt, and I am very much in want of money.

Thos. Dewees."⁴⁰

On a previous bill to Cameron, Dewees had written "You'll please to take notice that I shall sell your pistols, &c., to pay myself."⁴¹

³⁸ *Pennsylvania Colonial Records*, X, 595.

³⁹ Dr. Smyth said Thomas Dewees was "as tyrannical, cruel, infamous a villian as ever disgraced human nature." John F. D. Smyth, *Tour in the United States*, II, 294.

⁴⁰ *Pennsylvania Archives*, 2nd Series, I, 448.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

This was too much. Cameron was indignant. He decided to lay the situation before the Committee of Safety. To these gentlemen he sent copies of Dewees' accounts and his "insulting notes . . . at different times, which," Cameron wrote, "I think will sufficiently convince you of the treatment I have received, and still continue to receive from him. You must be very sensible Gentⁿ that a man in my situation cannot procure money every time that the Jailer thinks proper to bring in his exorbitant Bills against him, nor do I think that he has a right to a farthing from me, as I am lately credibly informed that you make a sufficient allowance for me—Liquors or anything else that I would call for I would willingly pay for; and indeed I would have borrowed money to pay off this acct. today as I have done heretofore if he had not used me exceedingly Ill, as you may see by this note, trampling thereby upon the validity of your order adding the utmost insult to his tyrannical exorbitancy. You'll please to observe that in his last acct. he charges me for fire which I have not seen but twice in this room since I discharged his first account. Thus I must run myself in debt to answer his demands everytime he wants money, otherwise starve,⁴² or at best to live upon bread and water as one of my fellow sufferers now does, who has not a friend or relation to supply him. I wish Gentlemen you would consider these grievances and let me know in what manner I am to subsist agreeable to which I shall hereafter regulate myself. The peculiarity of my confinement puts it out of my power to serve myself even with water and therefore I make no doubt that you will give such orders in future as may prevent such false abuse and inhumanity. I shall also be much obliged to you to transmit a letter of mine to Lord Dunmore which may be opened for your inspection. I need not expect to go upstairs [to room with Gen'l. McDonald] until I hear from you."⁴³

"The inhuman and dishonest extortioner Thos. Dewees" was removed as keeper of this jail, being transferred with certain prisoners to another prison. Cameron, not satisfied with Dewees'

⁴² Three prisoners starved to death in this prison in 1773.

⁴³ Letters, June 8, 1776, *Pennsylvania Archives*, 2nd Series, I, 448. This was not the first complaint against Thomas Dewees. May 14, 1776, the Committee of Safety received for entry upon its Minutes a Resolution of Congress that the Committee "examine the Conduct of the Gaoler who had the Charge & Custody of Moses Kirkland and if they find him Culpable, that they have him removed." *Pennsylvania Colonial Records*, X, 567.

removal, next petitioned Congress to compel Dewees to refund the money which he had collected from Cameron. The result of this petition remains unknown.⁴⁴

Sometime after September of this year (1776), Alan Cameron, Dr. Smyth and Capt. McLean were confined in the same room. The following December, the three men decided upon a desperate scheme to effect an escape. The British army was then approaching through New Jersey towards Philadelphia. Congress had fled to Baltimore. Prisoners in groups, chained by twos, were being sent there for safer keeping.

The conditions of confinement were now so terrible that almost anything else was preferable. So Cameron and his two prison mates began their hazardous attempt. With much labor and exertion they opened a hole through the arched vaulting, and then cut with their pen knives through a two inch oak plank door, and got up through the cupola and, unobserved, on top of the prison. The plan was to descend by a rope, to flee across the Delaware, and make their way to the British army at Burlington and Mount Holly, only eighteen miles distant. The rope was made of the unsound paillasses on which the men had slept and their old blankets which had been torn up to make a rope. The daring and intrepid Cameron was to make the first attempt to descend. But scarcely had he lowered himself beneath the edge of the roof, when the rotten rope gave way and Cameron dropped nearly fifty feet to the frozen ground below.⁴⁵

Cameron was picked up apparently lifeless, both ankles broken, and his body badly shattered. Smyth made an entreaty for Cameron, offering two hundred dollars to anyone to save his life. And when he made further inquiry about his friend, Smyth said he was told that Cameron "was dead, and in hell," and that he was wished "in the same condition."⁴⁶ As a result of the failure of this daring scheme, Dr. Smyth and Capt. McLean were cast into the dungeon for condemned felons, without light, bed-clothes, straw or heavy clothing, and for the space of thirty-six hours were denied food and drink.

Subsequently, when still more prisoners were transferred to Bal-

⁴⁴ Revolutionary Papers, IV, 41. State Library, Harrisburg.

⁴⁵ *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XIII (1889); John F. D. Smyth, *Tour in the United States*, II, 297-298.

⁴⁶ John F. D. Smyth, *Tour in the United States*, II, 298.

timore, Smyth and McLean were included among them; but Cameron, in a critical condition, was taken "to the sick quarters in the city."⁴⁷ From this time, the story of Alan Cameron is blank until the 19th of May, 1777. On that day, when Mrs. Susannah Papley of Philadelphia returned to her house she found the following letter:

"Madam:

Notwithstanding my inability of Body, for taking a French leave of you yet my situation and the circumstances of the times render it very necessary; and when you reflect impartially upon my long and rigorous Captivity, attended with other misfortunes, I hope will in your opinion as well as of every well disposed person sufficiently appologise for my present conduct. But probably you'll not have sufficient Charity for my Hopes, in that case making my intention known to you or any in the family might prove fatal to me in their consequences, and that is my only reason for not making you privy to my present undertaking. You know Ma'am your Acct. with me from the 25th December 76 to the 13th Instant is discharged; and enclosed I leave on the Table what money I became due you since. I return you my sincere thanks for the tender care you have taken of me amidst my greatest misfortune.

Please to offer my kind Compts. to your Family, my fellow prisoner Mr. Cooke included. I am

Madam

Your most Obedient Humble Servant

Alan Cameron"⁴⁸

On the 20th of June, 1777, two gentlemen from Philadelphia arrived at Cape May, New Jersey. When they applied to one Thomas Hand to assist them in getting on board a British man-of-war, suspicions were aroused. The two gentlemen were taken into custody by the Militia, and were examined by the Justice before whom Thomas Hand bore testimony against them. "And," wrote Henry Hand and James Whilldin to Robert Morris of Philadelphia, "Sundry papers being found upon them we appre-

⁴⁷ *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XIII (1889), 63.

⁴⁸ *Revolutionary Papers*, XII, 25, State Library, Harrisburg. This letter is written in Cameron's own hand writing, beautifully done.

hend they are prisoners of War—and have made their escape from Philadelphia—and say their names are Charles Cooke and Allen Maddison; but by their papers and Confession on a stricter examination Confess their names are Allen Cameron and Charles Cook—the former of which having made his escape out of your prison, by heaving himself out of the window. The Prisoners are in Custody and we wait your Orders to know what further shall be done with them.”⁴⁹

Alan Cameron was surely persistent and determined to obtain his release. The very next day after his arrest at Cape May he wrote a letter to the well-known Dr. Thomas Bond of Philadelphia, who of all persons would realize Cameron’s physical condition, asking him to use his influence with his acquaintances in Congress to obtain permission for the Cape May authorities to exchange Cameron for one of the “persons of consequence” who were held as prisoners on the British ships near Cape May, and whom Congress desired to release.⁵⁰

Cameron did not secure his release, however, until sometime in 1778, when, due to his extreme hardships and experiences, his health was greatly impaired. Being able to walk only with the aid of crutches, he was incapable of military service.⁵¹ To Alan Cameron this apparent end of a military career must have been the worst of his misfortunes.

He returned to his native Errach and was placed on government half-pay. There he recovered in such an astonishing manner, that scarcely any visible marks of his lameness remained. After his recovery, Alan Cameron began the long and illustrious military career which was probably delayed by his experiences in the American Revolution. With a commission of major commandant, he raised, in 1794, a body of a thousand men which became known as the famous Cameron Highlanders. In 1794 and 1795 he saw service in Flanders; in 1796 he was in the West Indies, taking part in the recapture of Martinique, after which he was gazetted a lieutenant colonel in the army; in 1797, due to losses of his men, he drafted a new 79th Regiment of Cameron Highlanders. After 1799, his activities included an expedition to the Helder, the battle of Alexandria (1801), and service in Denmark, Sweden, Por-

⁴⁹ Revolutionary Papers, XIII, 24, State Library, Harrisburg.

⁵⁰ *Pennsylvania Archives*, 1st Series, V, 383.

⁵¹ *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XIII (1889, 63.

tugal, and especially in the battles of Talavera and Busaco. His rank was now major general, but, due to ill health, he was compelled to return home. He performed no more military service for Great Britain.

In January, 1815 the broken-down soldier was designated Sir Alan Cameron, a Knight Commander of the Bath. In 1819, he became a lieutenant general, and on March 9th, 1828, still staunchly loyal to Great Britain, Sir Alan died.⁵²

⁵² "Obituary, Sir Alan Cameron," *Gentleman's Magazine*, XCVIII, Part I (January-June, 1828), 367.