

LETTERS OF TWO DISTINGUISHED PENNSYLVANIA
OFFICERS OF THE REVOLUTION.

The following letters of Col. William Thompson, of the Pennsylvania Rifle Battalion, raised under Act of Congress of June 14, 1775, and Gen. John Armstrong of the Pennsylvania Line and Militia, will be found in the Manuscript Department of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Col. Thompson's military services, although short, were marked by training and efficiency. After the British evacuated Boston, before which his battalion was posted on Prospect Hill, it was ordered to Canada, where he was captured June 8, 1776, at Three River. He was not exchanged until October 25, 1780, for Major Gen. Baron de Reidesel. He died at Carlisle Penna., September 3, 1781, aged 45 years.

John Armstrong was appointed a Brigadier General in the Pennsylvania Line March 1, 1776, and resigned April 4, 1777. He reentered the service and was commissioned Major General of the Pennsylvania Militia June 5, 1777, and commanded them in the battles of Brandywine and Germantown,—in the latter, the right wing of the army. His letter, which follows, is interesting, as he gives an estimate of the commands of his own and Gen. Potter, three days after Washington's army had reached Valley Forge; that he had been given command of the Militia, operating in the vicinity of Philadelphia, and the plans he had adopted to prevent foraging by the enemy. Gen. Armstrong died at Carlisle, Penna., March 9, 1795, aged seventy years.

CAMP ON PROSPECT HILL, 25th Jan^y. 1775.

MY DEAR SIR

Yours of the 12th Inst is before me, and I rejoyce at the appointment of the Officers for the five new Reg^{ts} indeed the exceed my highest expectations; and you may depend the Honour of Pennsylv^a is entirely safe in their Hands; and when they get the Reg^{ts} compleat the Liberties of America will be better Supported by them than ever it *was*, or can possibly be, by the whole Troops Raised or to be raised in the Massachusetts.

As it is very likly that a great number of Troops will be wanted in Canada next Campaign, and that General Lee will command in that Quarter, I must beg for the Hon^r of our Province and the Good of the Service that you enda-

your to get our Troops sent there, and the whole to act together in one Brigade if they are sent to different places and act sperately as they are new raised Reg^{ts} our Officers will be commanded by every Damned fellow of this country and never have it in their power to gain Hon^r to themselves or the Country that sent them. I would write you very fully on the Subject as I am now out of the Service and (I suppose) may speak my Mind freely, but I hope to see you very Shortly. Let me however return you my most Sincere Thanks for your kind attention to my character and Interest. I am only sorry that my name has been mentioned and my Friends put to so much Trouble on my Acc^t. What ever Name or Tittle M^r Fry passed by in this Country before I came into the Service I know not, but Sure I am he was not known in the Army when all the Ranks of Officers were Settled last Aug^t and it is not unlikely but the Mistake is greater in appointing of him now than leaving him out before. However I believe his Brigade will be very happy with him, as it is reported he is a very Peaceable Innofensive kind of a Man and has been fully instructed in the Art of War by Gen^l Thomas.

I hope none of my Friends will blame me for leaving the Service at this time. Be assured no Man has the Good of the Service more at Heart, nor with more chearfullness would risque Life in Defence of American Liberty, but at the same time my own Hon^r and indeed the Good of the Service require my Resignation, for be assured if indavours are made to keep Honour of preferment out of a Soldiers reach the Army must in a Short time be Composed of People who only mean to get Rich in the Service. And thank God I am not a Yankey.

You mention a Prospect of my being provided for to the Southward. I should be extremely happy in going there but there can't be the least occasion for my Services in that part of the World as the have Men of Hon^r & understanding enough to command the Armies in Virginia and Maryland. Give my best Complim^{ts} to Col. S^t Clair and tell him

I would have Answered his Letter long er now but expected to have Seen him at Philad^a two Weeks agoe. For God-sake keep our Troops together and keep them out of this Damned Country if Possible.

As I am now at a little leasure to think of my Family I have wrote to M^{rs} Thompson to come to Town, as I must attend on our Assembly some Weeks. you'll therefore please to forward her Letter by the very first opp^r.

My best Complim^{ts} wait on my Brother George Read and all Friends and I am D^r Sir yours very Sincerely

W^M THOMPSON.

P. S. No hopes of geting into Boston.

CAMP NEAR BARTHOLOMEWS, 22^d Dec^r 1777

DEAR SIR

General Washington has requested me to write to Council that the Same number of Militia may be kept up throughout the Winter as are at present in the field, or as thro' the Cource of the Campaign. Of these with me I look for a return this evening but Shall not detain the Express for it, I take the number to be about Sixteen hundred, and wth Gen^l Potter yet in Chester County, four or five hundred—of these a considerable number will be free in the beginning of January.

I make no doubt but that my last letters will fully Suggest to the Legislature of this State, altho' not immediately address'd to the Representative body, as will the natural observation of both branches of Government, the much exposed Situation of the Eastern parts of the State, but in a particular manner, the extensive Country on this Side the Scuykill. The Winter possition of the Continental Army at what is called the Forge or Valley Hill, will we hope chiefly preserve the County of Chester with Several Other good effects, whilst the attempt for the defence of the Counties of Philadelphia & Bucks appears to remain chiefly or rather wholly with the militia of the State; an effort as arduous as it is laudible, and if attended with only a partial degree of Success, will be all that that the most Sanguine reason can expect.

The Winter Arrangement on this Side Scuykill the General has thought proper (at the same time adding his own instructions) to commit to me. This I have digested in the best manner I can which hath met with his Excellencys approbation. The essential parts or outlines whereof are none other than taking a variable Station on every leading Road betwixt Scuykill and Delaware of which I find there are to the number of Nine, that may be called Capitol Roads—the general Service on each can only be to compete with Smaller partys of the Enemy, prevent Such from proceeding into the Country & intercept the business of Marketing or any other intercourse of the disaffected with the Enemy as far as circumstances will admit. Standing Picquets must be placed on every road, and Patroles aided by a few light Horse to precede as near the Enemy as may be reasonable. This mode will necessarily throw the troops into detachments, in that way they must be employed if employed to any good purpose at all. This method will be subject to its inconveniencies particularly feeding the Men, Changing the Battalions when some are free, delivery of Arms &c. but in a choice of difficulties, we have nothing for it but the least. The general arrangement with particular instructions to the Commander on each Road is all that the Season will permit me to do. The various movements & lodgings, are already too hard for me and severer weather must be at hand. General Potter says he can by no means tarry the Winter And Some Head these people must certainly have & very Suddenly else all will go to confusion. I had, therefore flattered my Self that from my letter by Doctor Duffield, a new appointment wou'd have been made, and the person ready for duty—a notice of this Sort I hope Soon to be favour'd with & think it already on the road.

Having the Hon^r to be

Your Excellencies

Most humb^l Serv^t

JOHN ARMSTRONG