

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS OF RUDOLPH
AND SARAH BIDDLE TILLIER.

Contributed by MRS. CLEMENT A. GRISCOM.

[Sarah Biddle Tillier was a daughter of John Biddle, the youngest son of William Biddle, 2d, b. in 1707, and married March 3, 1736, by Friends' ceremony, to Sarah Owen; who had two sons and three daughters, among them Sarah Biddle, married 1st, James Penrose, by whom she had a son Clement Biddle Penrose; 2d, John Shaw; 3d, Rudolph Tillier.]

Sarah Tillier to her Sister.

Berne Jan the 19

* * * * We had a very agreeable passage of 29 days from Lands End to the Lizard point. The 5th day after we Sailed there appeared a small Boat toss'd on the Waves, which ran very high in a Calm. To our surprise no vesel could be discovered; we were waiting with anxious fears for her arrival, which was full an hour I ran to the side of the ship, as if it was in my power to help them to board us; rusk & wine to recover them from their fatigue, was all the services that we could render. They inform'd us that they came in a Sloop from Hallifax, bound to New York, with 28 passengers on Board; had been out 28 d^r & were out of Bread & water; that the passengers were chiefly Women & children, the cries of the latter for water was so distressing, that their Fathers, determined to come up with us in hopes of reliefe, tho their Cap^t was much against it, as he thought we were to great a distance, being upwards of twelve miles. They were ready to give out when within two miles of us, one of them was obliged to give up & their boat half full of water, but Heaven reliev'd their sufferings by a favorable breeze. They set off with a supply & we

had the pleasure of seeing them board their Sloop. After this we saw fresh sail every day, one that we thought was an Algerine, which chass'd us 24 hours; which allarm'd, M^r Abercrombe extreemely. Some days the ship toss'd so that we could not keep our feet. M^{rs} Bunyon & my self were sitting on the trunks & holding fast to a rope, chatting about our absent friends, when a sea roll'd in at the cabin window which had the apearance of a Grand fall of water & obliged us to run up the hatches & call the Cap^t who orderd the dead lights up. I was astonish'd that I never was allarm'd nor one moment sick the whole passage, M^{rs} Bunyon was ill all the passage. The day before we made land, we saw two ships salute each other, it was a most beautiful sight, but we could not tell the Meaning. In the evening a Cutter came along side, & inform'd us they were sent to conduct us in to plymouth; there had been an engagement with the Russian & Sweedish fleet & that the Sweeds had the worst of the battle. The next Evening to our joy we saw the Isle of White; another Cutter came up to offer to take passengers that chose to land, at Dover. At four O'clock in the Morning we had a view of Dover. The Cutter return'd to bring a pilot, who boarded us in a small boat that was to take us to the Cutter, which they inform'd us was the one that we saw half a mile distant; we boarded the boat but found that she was not the right vesel & we had to go several Miles in the bleakest part of the sea, close in with the white Cliffs of Albion. My belov'd Tillier & Clem wanted to go to London; my desire was as strong as theirs to see this great Celebrated Metropolis, but our finances wisper'd, it is most prudent to hurry on, we attend'd to the voice of prudence, & boarded our small Cutter proceeded to France. To prevent landing twice, double Costom house expence & trouble, our intention was to have landed at Callais, but the wind prooving more

fare for Boulogne-Sur-Mer, we made for that port, found the tide against our landing. Flat bottom'd boats came to our assistance, & here begins a curious scene. The boys that managed our fourth embarkation run us a ground; we perceived runing down to the Shore, great numbers of Women & Girls, I could not imagine the reason of such numbers of women receiving us. They tied their short petticoats round their midle & enterd the Sea, which was above the knees of the tallest of them, and we were soon surround'd. A dispute began who should have the honor of carrying us on shore; the Contest was ended by an Old woman telling me to put a leg on each side, & take her round the neck, not a pleasing task for me I'll assure you, but necessity obliged me to Comply, and being prepared we march'd on in Indian file to make our Grand entré in France. My fears for my husband & child tempt'd me to look round, but such figures I never beheld, notwithstanding my situation, my legs in the water, could not help laughing heartily. In this manner we were Landed, & found two kings officers ready to receive us & take Charge of our baggage, allso an English Man to conduct us to a most elligant Englis Hotel, kept by a M^r Knowles, whose Charriot conducted us to the Hotel wet & dripping as we were, found it fill'd with French & English nobility, going to the Camp at St. Omers, were there was to be a grand review. Our Journey through Picardie was delightful, but it would take a quire of paper to give a just discription of all the Villages & Country we pass'd. The first Night we lodg'd at Abé Vile; the 2d Evening at Hotel at Chantelier, where we had a view of the Palace belonging to the Prince of Conde, which is a very superb building, but before we came to Chantelier pass'd that of the duke Fitz-James, whose pleasure grounds I admired more than any I saw in France; a quarter of a Mile beyond is the Palace of the Duke

De Chartres, on an Eminence the Shape of a sugar-loaf, with hanging gardens, which made a very beautiful appearance. The third day arrived in Paris; took apartments at the Hotel York. M^r Tillier waited on M^r Grand, but found he was at his seat at Passy, however, soon after we receiv'd a note that he had come to Paris, & beg M^r T. to bring me immediately out to Madam Grand, that he expected we would dine with him that day, tho it was then one o'clock, he was as much pleased to hear of our arrival. Our brother Le Chev: Tillier was gone to Berne; Madam G. & Madam Grand, the daughter, treated me with great attention, as did all our Friends; his Excellency M^r Jefferson was very polite. My Rudolph tells me this letter must go off & I must leave everything but telling how we were receiv'd by our dear Family. We did not chuse to inform them when we should be in Berne, only that we had arriv'd safe in Paris. Went to a tavern & sent to our eldest brother Antoni, who came in a few moments & receiv'd us with tears of joy; inform'd us he had apartments provided in his House for us, if we could put up with Batchelors fare; conducted us immediately to his elegant dwelling, & inquired if there was anything that could be got for us; if we wanted cloathing; order'd my room to be prepared as I directed, requested me to see if the sheets were harden'd as I liked them, & the next day he told me that everything in his House I was Misstress off, & must order as if I was at my own home; ask'd us if we wanted money, that I might have what I chose.

Sarah Tillier to family in Philadelphia.

I begin to be extreemly anxious about my dear family, it is nigh a year since I left my Native home & have heard but twice from thence in that long time, but I do not accuse you of neglect, as I am acquainted with the uncertainty of the Seas & the neglect of people in general in forwarding letters. This is the fourth

to my belov'd Father Aunt Biddle & you for I am Oblige to adress you all in one letter having so many to write & not as handy as I comonly am at anything that requires my Eyes or hands for reasons mention'd in my Other letters. * * * * I begin to return my numerous visits, which are all in the highest stiles, but not that sweet sociability that enlivens our agreeable societies in America. The Ladies of Berne are an example for Oeconomists to all the World; you have no Idea of management in Comparison of the Suisse, in their habilliment they are much as we are follow the Fashions of France & England with an adition of their own. The Liveing is very different, they cook much Bettor than we do, will make half a doz. dishes out of one of ours, notwithstanding that, I often long for a bit of bread & Butter, a flannel or Buckwheat cake, Butter is look'd on here as extreemely unwholesome except in Cookeries & my good brother will not let my belov'd Tillier & self touch it. At breakfast we have rusk like those we use with tea, & in the afternoon dry bread, but after the Tea is taken out, (for Company) we have Confectionary & creams of diferent sorts. The Vegetables are extreemely fine & well dress'd, we cut the roots of Selery in thin slices, stew it til it is tender in Milk add a few blades of mace & salt then thicken the sauce with a butter & flower; the leaves of the scarcity root dress'd in the same way is delightful as is Endive & Spinage cut small. Soup is a standing dish din'er & sup'er, the meat, veal accepted is not as fine as that of America, the Wood-cocks are superior, far, Venison they do not esteem much but allways keep that Beef & Hare in Vinegar several weeks before they use it, I think it exceeding good. Do not conclude from the above that I am an Epicure but wish to let you know everything your sister, Brother & Nephew enjoy, who loves you all tenderly.

Berne May the 4, 1789.

S. Tillier.

Sarah Tillier to Gen. and Mrs. Wilkinson.

The Rheumatism has prevented my writing to my belov'd sister & brother oftener than I have heretofore, am at present much better. * * * * Easter, which is a great day with us, both Councils marched in procession with their robes of State too & from Church A.M. accompanied by a good Band of Music. In the afternoon the exterior state which is composed of young Lad's of the age of my son, who imitate the Old Council in every respect, Debate Matters of State &c. & fit themselves for members hereafter; their Procession is very interesting & Pretty. In the front marches their under officers in Mantles striped with yellow, black & red, Ornamented with lace, representing the different ranks; then comes William Tell leading his little son with the apple on his head, accompanied by his wife dress'd in the Ancient Swiss dress with bow and arrows, twelve men in the ancient dress likewise, of each Canton, bearing their respective arms, other two dress'd in the armor worn when they fought for their Liberty in the famos Battle of Mudon; a gentleman dress'd in a Bear-skin so exact a resemblance I thought it was one of the Bears from the Ditch, which are keep't in remembrance of the first animal found & kill'd on the spot our Town stands & from that takes its name. A Man dress'd in the height of the Fashion for burlesque folow'd by a Grand Band of Music. Our young Councelors now make their appearance, with hearts fill'd with Emulation, & each one thinking he would fill the first post of honor one day or other; they are in Black, with a Councelor's Mantle dress'd in wreaths of natural flowers & large Bouquets in their hands; the contrast of Colour has a very Pleasing effect. I cannot help remarking the beauty of the flowers, of this place, the Carnation & many other that are unknown to

me are more elligant than anything I have seen of that kind. The Peasans allso have their sports of resting, rolling Eggs, &c., it is indeed a day of Jubilee. The day following the Baliwicks & offices of Consequence are drawn for, if 30 mean to draw there are so many Black Balls put in a Box & golden ones for the Baliwic; the Gentlemen must have gloves on that draw, and my Tillier was expected by every body to draw for the Castle his Pap'a was Governor of, but he means if life is spared to visit America before he settles. You may be sure the distant prospect of once more seeing you my belov'd sister & Brother is delightful to a sister who loves you with the sincere tenderness that I do. Berne has never been known so sickly as the past winter & present spring, few families without three & four sick at a time & at present the measels rages with great violence; in general it is very healthy. The streams of water are tended with the greatest Care, the sides & bottom are Paved with large flat stones & the stream turn'd where ever it is most advantageous to the farm; the Peasants neglect nothing belonging to them. Sometime ago two of them had a Law suit that lasted for several years & much money was expended by both parties, About a Stream of water that had been dry for fifteen years before the Comencement of the suit. This is an Excellent Country for Lawyers, tho' none but Citizens can follow any business what ever; trade is not incouraged; the Town is chiefly the residence of Ancient Rich families, officers of State, with Mechanic's to supply them. There is a large fair twice a year that supplies us with everything, we want, from Itali, France & Germany. It will give you pleasure to hear my good man is promoted, in the State, tho' he has no profit from it, but honor; he is one of the sixteen, they are the Censor, for which he has a Medal. It is a great Compliment as could have been paid, as there are none but old

Balifs in this Office & M^r Tillier, the only young man, the Honor is the more esteem'd. Heaven bless you my very dear Sister, Brother & babes, prays your, Aunt & Sister.

Tillier.

Berne May the 8.

We have lost a Sistor of M^r Tillier.

Rudolph Tillier and wife.

Berne 21 Octob^r 1789.

I wrote you fully Dear Brother the 28 July last under cover of M^r E. Lawrence. Since we have been deprivd of Letters from America which should give us some uneasiness if we did not attribut it to the convulsd state of france, which may have occasioned their miscariage, our health is prety well restablisht. We had several of the first class of refugees from france here as Comte d'Artois, P^{ce} Conde, the Pollignacs &c; the Pays de Vaud is full of them & more are expected since the revolution that brought the King from Versailles to Paris, of which you will be informed by the English papers. My Brother in the guards has been an actor in the most critical moment; he protected the Archbishop of paris when he was assaulted by the mob at the grand tumult or revolt; he was at the Halle aux bleds, after he was emploid in the delicate commission ab^t the retreat of the Troops at the Champ de Mars which prevented the bloodshed of many, which all he managed with the Aprobation of the Marq. Lafayette & his superior, but not without the most eminent danger of his Life. At the last tumult at Versailles the outside gate was consignd to him which he opened to M^r De Lafayette conditionaly, that he allone with 2 other should enter to speak to the King, upon which the King ordered no resistance should be made & that all the avenues sh^d be opened; many lost their Lives in that afray. You may judge from all this that

the Democratical party has the uperhand & that they will have the freeest Constitution; they have some great difficulty yett to overcome & one of the principal is to regulate & provide for their finances, which are notwithstanding all what has been done in a bad situation, relative particularly of the Debts. I mentioned to you that from the time of my arival in Europe how much people here & Geneva were interested if a Banqueroubey should take place many w^d be reduced from affuance to nothing: in such circumstances it would have been foolishness to think of proposing any privat business; at any other time I am sure I should have succeded to Sell Lands. Considering our situation here, I think to return with Sally next Spring, if possible, to America, till matters of our concerns are Settled. I can not with Safety draw on any office except my eldest Brother & to live in that depended state I will sooner retire to the wilds of America I shall write you more particular about this with my next. By oeconomy I hope we shall have ab^t a 100 guinies to undertake our journey, inclusive of the 50 assignd for the 1st Jan^r on M^r Lawrence. The russians & austrians have been Sucessfull this year ag^t the Sweedes & Turcs. I hope peace will be made between them this winter. We are here at present pretty well provided, but our neighbours are more or less in distress. My affectionate Love to father Brethren & all our dear relations & friends. I am

Your Sincere friends & B^{us}

R. Tillier

During the convulsed State of politics in france, please to adress your dispatches to M^r Lawrence, or via London.

My belov'd Father sisters, Brothers & friends will smile when I tell them, Motives of Oeconomy, deprives me the pleasure of writing them long letters, each Packet has cost us two Louis, & wee are now like Misers

hording up every farthing to pay our voyag to my dear native Country, should Heaven favor us in guarding us through the dangers of the Seas & the Algerines. My Tillier tells our reasons for returning, he has every Post of honor he can possibly have, but can have none of profit til his affairs are in a better train, besides Cenetor he has been chosen Member of a board of the Chamber of Lords, to try all cases of difuculty, Like the judges of supreme Court; he has had to speak on several causes, & is fully Occupied in studying Law, but our situation of dependence is truely Humiliating. I often walk three miles in an afternoon, which will surprise & shew you that I am much stronger than I was; I am so much of a Femme de Swiss, that I fear I am geting a goitre in my throat, which will not be very agreeable in America, though thought nothing of here. The news of Paris you will have, & were I to begin to give you accounts, I should not have room in my small letter. Our dear brother of the Guard has been in the greatest danger but is at present safe, Crownd with Applause by king and People; he is worthy of everything that can be said of him. Our eldest brother, as well as all the World with us, is deeply interested in the French funds, that you may be sure we are well informd of what passes, and should it be sufficiently Peaceable we mean in March to set out for one of the ports of France, but shall write before that, I feel the greatest impatience for the approach of spring & pray Continually for no accident to prevent our intended voyage.

Your aff. sister,
S. Tillier.