

LETTERS FROM A HESSIAN MERCENARY*

LAST WORDS of famous men, spoken in the very face of death, are universally interesting and often supremely significant. It is natural to assume that then, if ever, a man will speak the truth without equivocation, and therefore to treat what he says under such circumstances as if it were the pronouncement of an oracle or a revelation direct from heaven. If the statement of a dying hero happens also to be quotable, and to suit the purpose of one writing with a purpose, the temptation to quote him is likely to be well-nigh irresistible.

To this general rule, the case of the Hessian Colonel Carl Emil Curt von Donop is no exception. According to the account published by the French traveler, the Marquis de Chastellux, Colonel Donop was mortally wounded in an unsuccessful attack upon Fort Mercer, on the New Jersey side of the Delaware below Philadelphia, made in connection with General Howe's campaign of 1777. Carried in from the battlefield and carefully tended by the captain commanding the fort, the fallen mercenary had three days of pain during which to review his life and ponder his situation. When about to die, he was reported to have said to those around him: "It is an early end of a fine career, but I die a victim of my ambition and of the avarice of my sovereign."¹

Although the French traveler's account of the colonel's death and dying statement professes to be based upon the statement of an ocular and auricular witness, its accuracy is open to question—and has already been questioned.² Today it would be difficult, but neither necessary nor very profitable, to prove beyond question either that

* The letters of the Hessian Colonel Donop to his friend the Prince of Prussia, subsequently King Frederick William II, were found by Dr. Hans Huth among the prince's miscellaneous papers in the library of the royal palace in Berlin, and were turned over by him to the Brandenburg Prussian *Hausarchiv* in Berlin-Charlottenburg, where they now are. Most of them are in French, the rest in German. So far as is now known, they have never been published, either in the original or in translation. Upon them Dr. Huth's article is based, and from them its direct quotations are taken.—C. V. EASUM, *translator*, University of Wisconsin.

¹ François Jean, Marquis de Chastellux, *Voyages dans l'Amérique septentrionale dans les années 1780, 1781, 1782* (2nd ed., 1788), I. 227 ff.

² Notably by Max von Eelking (*Die deutschen Hülfsstruppen im nordamerikanischen Befreiungskriege, 1776 bis 1783*, Hannover 1863), and by Edward J. Lowell (*The*

he did or that he did not say exactly what he is quoted as having said. After some days of kind treatment and careful though futile nursing he might well have made some such remark as a gesture of gratitude to the friendly enemies who were caring for him. Having found an early death at the end of his long trans-Atlantic journey, instead of the brilliant victories in which he had hoped to share and which were to have won a military reputation for him and to have made his fortune, he may well have given voice to his disillusionment. Things are likely to look darker to a man after he has been hit than before.

We do have today, however, the very convincing evidence of a large number of his own letters to establish the truth of one part of the statement attributed to him, and to disprove the rest. He was the victim of his own ambition, as he had gladly volunteered for the service upon which he was engaged. The avarice of his sovereign therefore had nothing to do with the case, except in so far as it may have been responsible for the presence of Hessian troops on American soil, whither Colonel Donop had been permitted but not required to accompany them. If the service in which he was engaged had ever seemed in any way wrong or reprehensible to him, he waited until the moment of his death to say so. No such question is raised in his letters to the Prince of Prussia.

In addition to the evidence they offer concerning the character of their writer, and the general attitude of one who may be presumed to have been a fairly typical representative of the officers of German troops serving with the British, the colonel's letters furnish a great deal of detailed information about the conditions under which these mercenaries served. While this information will only confirm or supplement what the specialists in the field already know, much of it would be new to all but the specialists; and any student of history would find the letters themselves extremely interesting reading.

It will be remembered that the Prince of Prussia, to whom these letters were written, was the son of Augustus William, brother of Frederick II, who had been summarily removed from the command of an army during the second campaign of the Seven Years' War,

and had died the next year without regaining the king's favor. As Frederick II had no direct heir, Prince William's son Frederick William, then only a half-grown boy, became heir-apparent to the throne of Prussia, under the guardianship of his uncle Prince Henry, Frederick's second brother. As the boy grew toward manhood, both his illustrious uncles predicted a brilliant future for him; but as the years passed and he failed to show the intellectual keenness, seriousness of purpose, or devotion to duty that they expected of him, the king made no secret of his disappointment and excluded him completely from participation in public business. In fact, he tried to make certain that the prince, on becoming king, would be forced by his own ignorance of affairs to continue under the tutelage of his uncle Henry, to whom Frederick frequently passed on information not available even to his ministers.

Under such circumstances, it was almost inevitable that the young prince should resolve first of all that there should be no further tutelage when he became king, and that he should rally around himself a group of discontented Prussians and ambitious non-Prussians who looked forward to the day of his accession as to their day of opportunity. As it was not unusual for the Prussian army to draw into its service aspiring young men from the smaller German states, it is in no way surprising that Colonel Donop should have been one of those who looked forward to a brilliant career in the Prussian service when his young friend the prince should have become king. If in the meanwhile he could enhance his own reputation by serving in the American adventure—for it was to him just an adventure and a military opportunity—so much the better.

When in 1776 the Landgraf of Hesse placed certain of his regiments at the disposal of the British king for use against the "rebels" in North America, Colonel Donop, then thirty-six years old and personal adjutant to the Landgraf, asked for and was granted permission to accompany them. This fateful turn of fortune (as he thought) in his favor he reported to the Prince of Prussia on January 25, 1776, as follows:

The Landgraf has graciously granted me permission to march with them, although the guards are not going, giving me the chasseurs' corps as my own, and the command also of the grenadiers' corps, over which I am as highly pleased as a man can be. I should have preferred, to be sure, to enter your service rather than go off on this expedition; but as you are not yet king, I take the liberty of assuring your Royal Highness that I have taken this step

only with a view to perfecting myself in my profession and making myself more worthy of the honor of one day serving you.

These words, the veracity of which is scarcely open to question, say all that is necessary to establish the state of mind in which Donop set out upon his way to America. The letter affords further evidence that he was not under any compulsion to go. On the contrary, he thought it a special favor that he was permitted to participate in a war which in his opinion could lead only to certain victory. Right at the beginning of the undertaking, he secured an independent command. He would much rather have entered the Prussian service. Since that, however, was for the time being impossible, he thought of the American war as an advanced course of schooling for his subsequent career. Surely there would be opportunities for him to distinguish himself, and so to make sure of the favor of his friend the prince.

In judging the mental attitude of the German troops that fought in the foreign service, most writers have failed to draw a distinction between the soldiers' and the officers' conceptions of that service. Certainly the majority of the soldiers were sent off under compulsion and conducted themselves accordingly. With the officers, it was different; they burned with ambition to demonstrate their valor and to win martial successes which they would not have found possible in the tedious parade-ground service of garrison duty at home. This conception of the trade of the soldier as a profession must be understood if one is to judge rightly the thought-processes of the officers of that period. Since it was generally impossible for the German officer to advance his career at home, he took service wherever a better future seemed to beckon him; but that did not at all signify the complete abandonment of his "fatherland." Count Matthias Schulenberg, for example, entered the service of the Republic of Venice and died there at a ripe old age after having served for decades as its supreme military commander; but he never forgot his concern for his home-land, and felt always to a certain degree conscience-bound by a sense of duty to his old sovereign, the king of Prussia.

To the Hessian officers who, in the service of England, were to fight the rebels in America, the war seemed to offer the finest prospects of success. They did not doubt for an instant that the disturbance would soon be ended. Indeed Donop even dreamed that when that victory had been won a new war would be declared, to wit:

“against all the powers in this part of the new world,” for which resources would be found in Mexico and Peru. That idea did not seem to him at all fantastic, since the army numbered 60,000 men and was supported, furthermore, by the British fleet.

As matters had not yet gone quite so far as that, however, Donop’s immediate task was to transport his troops to the point of embarkation at the mouth of the Weser. He reported to the prince that the morale of the soldiers was very high; and that all reports then current about mutiny among the troops were untrue. On the contrary, the army simply could not wait for the day when it could get at the enemy.

The delay in our march has caused mortal chagrin in all our corps, and I cannot adequately praise to your Royal Highness the fine spirit of our soldiers, as proof of which I have the honor to tell you that we have had but five deserters from the first brigade.³

At last in May, 1776, all were on board the transports, and once more before bidding farewell to Europe Donop asked the prince to continue to hold him high in his favor, and promised to try meanwhile to make himself from day to day more worthy of it. Although “4460 miles of distance” lay between Potsdam and America, Von Donop hoped that the prince would occasionally let him know how things were going with him. And speaking of the picked British troops that were to fight side by side with the Hessians, he expressed a wish that they would “show us the way to glory.” Thus, he wrote, “I hope that we shall not lose the reputation so long rightfully enjoyed by the Hessian nation, and finally, Monseigneur, that it may by this expedition make itself more worthy to sustain your rights, if you should wish some day to have it for your ally.” In concluding his letter, the young colonel fell, with the facility of the user of a rubber stamp, into the heroic-philosophical pose then conventional for the well-born soldier going off to war, making free use of the fulsome flattery expected of courtiers and the flowery phrases of the polite letter-writing of the period: “I shall be angry (if one can be angry after death) to have lost my life for any other monarch but

³ It may be questioned whether the colonel was not deceiving himself about the morale of his troops, and whether desertions would not have been more numerous if such stringent measures (which he naturally did not mention) had not been taken to prevent them. He would of course wish his prospective patron and employer to think of him as an efficient and inspiring leader whose men would gladly follow him anywhere.

you, for I am forever firmly convinced that you will become the best of all the kings who have ever lived. With this sentiment, I shall be unto the tomb the very humble servant. . . . etc.”

Their convoy took them first to England, then after a further voyage of fourteen weeks to Sandy Hook by way of Halifax. Donop found himself with a hundred and sixty men on board the *Kirmin-gdon*, a fairly new ship of two hundred and twenty-three tons. The voyage was monotonous and even the menu was of little interest, as the daily bill of fare varied at most from pork to beef or from groats to peas. Only eight lives were lost in the crossing; but bad fogs very nearly caused one serious accident, when an English warship fired on a transport (without hitting it, fortunately), because the commander thought that the transport captain was about to go over to the rebels.

It was in August, 1776, that Donop's convoy finally arrived at Sandy Hook. From that time on, a careful daybook kept mostly by the colonel's nephew, Lieutenant von Donop, was sent regularly to the Prince of Prussia. These reports were supplemented by occasional letters from Donop and battle-sketches by Major Pauli. The military operations of this period of American history are already too well known to justify reproducing these "relations" in full; but there are many characteristic items in Donop's letters that are worth preserving, his opinion of the two British commanders, the Howe brothers, for example: "They are both agreeable fellows, and while the admiral seems to be more of a man of feeling than the general, I must do the latter the justice to say that he takes all possible pains to make our stay here pleasant."

On August 13, Donop was debarked with his three Hessian battalions and the *Jägercorps* on Staten Island, and ten days later found himself on Long Island with Howe's army, ready to drive the Americans from their position on Brooklyn Heights. Some deserters who came over painted a rather unfavorable picture of the American situation; and the enthusiasm of the Hessians for the attack was considerably heightened thereby. An excerpt from their detailed orders for the operation reads as follows:

The cavalry must march slowly enough that the infantry can keep pace with it. Bravery need not be recommended when dealing with brave men of whom, with God's help and support, naught else is to be expected, especially if this

predetermined plan is carried out in all its details. This must be particularly impressed upon the grenadiers.

Donop's advance was well supported by two light guns that he took with him. These so-called "toy guns" had been made under the orders of an English artillery captain named Congreve, adjutant to General Howe and discoverer of the fact that such light guns could be conveniently carried over hill and dale. In the course of the advance, Congreve, Lieutenant Donop and Major Pauli were all slightly wounded.

When General Howe, after completing the conquest of the Brooklyn approach to the city, followed Washington's retreating army across the East River into New York, Colonel Donop and his Hessians were among the most interested observers. Their landing on Manhattan Island on September 15 gave the colonel such a thrill that he declared he could never forget it. "Picture to yourself, illustrious prince, the most splendid stage-setting of the opera and the descent of King Jupiter himself, and you will have an idea of our military spectacle." Thus it is apparent that, for him, the war was still being staged as a sort of military pageant, so that he could think of nothing better than opera effects to draw upon for comparison.

With little further fighting except what was necessary to cover his retreat, Washington yielded to the British the possession of the city, which he had found untenable in the face of their superior numbers and naval strength. A few days after the British had established themselves there, a fire broke out. Colonel Donop was never quite certain how it had originated, but wrote an unvarnished description of it which is interesting in itself. While his account lends no support to the old theory that the American Colonel Scott was responsible for the fire, it does lay the blame upon some unnamed Americans.

Although the city of New York was occupied by British troops under the command of General Robertson, some rebels who had remained hidden in the city had found an opportunity to set fire to houses in various places on the so-called Broad Way, on the side toward the North River. The fire broke out about 1:00 A.M. and, in spite of all efforts to check it, it is estimated that more than six hundred houses were reduced to ashes, along with the old English and Lutheran churches. Thirteen of the actual incendiaries were captured in the act and imprisoned in order to learn from them about the whole conspiracy. Two were thrown into the fire by the mob, and the sailors hanged one by the heels after his right hand, (in which he had held a torch when caught setting fire to a house), had been cut off by a Highlander.

Within a very short time, a large number of others were taken into custody who were suspected of complicity in the wicked business.

General Robertson's own handsome dwelling-house was among those burned, All together, the number is reckoned at about eighty right good houses, which for the most part had belonged to persons of distinction, for the aforesaid Broad Way is the most attractive location of the whole city. At the near end of this street is the government's fort, in which the governor of the whole province formerly lived; but his house has since been totally demolished. Between this fort and the said street there has been a pretty green esplanade on which a statue of the present king of England was erected in 1770; but during the rebellion it was torn down. The esplanade itself is still surrounded by an iron picket fence, but the turf has all been dug out and used on the breast-works. The whole city had been put by the rebels into a good state of defense, with intrenchments, batteries, and lines of engineers' works all around it; but they have made as little use of these as of their intrenchments [on Long Island].

Colonel Donop thought that Washington had made a mistake in not holding more tenaciously to the defensive fortifications of New York and in falling back upon his White Plains position instead, but did not blame him for the loss of Fort Washington. Before attacking that fort, the British had succeeded in getting around to the north of it. In the assault, the Hessian troops specially distinguished themselves; but Donop was not present.

When Washington left his position on the Hudson to swing around to the south-west across New Jersey, the British army was divided into detachments to follow him. Donop was then given an independent command, and eventually took up winter quarters with his brigade in Bordentown, on the Jersey side of the Delaware a few miles south of Trenton. He took no active part in the battle of Trenton, but the letter in which he reported that affair to the prince throws some interesting light upon it and upon the way in which it affected the morale of the Hessians. He wrote on January 6, 1777:

After our light dragoons had carried off General Lee from right in the midst of his army corps, and after we had spread ourselves out a little too widely in winter quarters, General Washington conceived the idea of surprising the garrison of Trenton on the Delaware, which was composed of three Hessian regiments,—to wit, Losberg, Knyphausen and Rall, with twenty English dragoons and fifty chasseurs from my corps,—all under the command of Colonel Rall. So . . . in the night of the 25th-26th he crossed the river six miles higher up and, favored by the worst sort of weather, made his march so skilfully that his advance-guard of three thousand men had entered the town at seven o'clock in the morning before a soldier could seize his arms. Because of the high wind, the rain and the sleet, no one had heard the musketry-fire at the outposts, although the pickets had defended themselves valiantly. In

the confusion Colonel Rall and four other officers were killed or mortally wounded. Seven sought refuge with me at Bordentown with about five hundred men, with and without arms; but ten others were wounded and so captured along with their comrades,—six guns, fifteen flags, seven hundred men.

There, then, is an eternal disgrace to our nation, and a clear proof that men are brave only when they are well led. For these were the same regiments which only a little while ago displayed such bravery in the capture of Fort Washington, a post which (situated as it was) ought to have been impregnable.

This unhappy blow then obliged the general to withdraw his troops to this point or to risk their being cut off or beaten in detail. Milord Cornwallis, who commands this corps, having reassembled the greater part of it at Princeton [Printztown] and wishing to see whether the enemy wanted to fight, marched on the second of this month to Trenton; but he (the enemy!) retired behind the creek [*cric*] which cuts the town in two, and made during the night such a clever march by his right that he not only turned our left but defeated the 71st English regiment on his way, burned our forage depot and made prisoners of our invalids in Princeton itself,—one of whom was my aide-de-camp Lt. Donop.

We pursued him at top speed [*à toute jambes*], but as he had destroyed all the bridges we were obliged to give it up completely and to permit Mr. Washington to gain the mountains of . . . Morristown. From there he can make it uncomfortable for our right at Elizabethtown, and he has already captured fifty men of the Waldeck regiment there.

Your Royal Highness will readily perceive that all this has been extremely fatiguing for the troops, and has revived the rebels' spirits. We must see what these fellows will try to do when the winter is over. For my part, I hope that they will come to us to settle the affair [by conciliation?]. They would actually have more to gain by attacking us here; for we [send out mounted patrols only from Raritan (?)] but [as] . . . they know very well that they cannot measure up [to] our army, I believe that they will confine themselves to disturbing us in our quarters,—where we are [already] uncomfortable enough, having but one house per company, so that we cannot go on in this way very long.

I am also convinced that we can go straight to Philadelphia as soon as the ice on the Delaware will support the guns. I hope then soon to send you from there a complete report of the whole campaign.

Remaining, for the present, with respect, veneration and affection,
 Monseigneur, Your Royal Highness's very
 humble and very obedient servant,
 Col. Donop

I have no paper to make an envelope.

Marching into Philadelphia, when it was attempted the following summer, proved to be a much more difficult and hazardous operation than Colonel Donop had thought it would be in January, 1777. He seems in fact to have urged Cornwallis to attempt it in January, but in vain. Instead, the British evacuated most of New Jersey.

Donop's Hessians were quartered in New Brunswick and had a fairly quiet time of it. The repeated attempts which Lord Howe was making at that time to win over deserters by proclamations offering them rewards had at first, according to Donop's reports, very little success. In April the situation of the American troops, he thought, was growing steadily worse. "They are in a very bad way," he wrote. "They are beginning in fact to be seriously in want of salt and of other necessaries; their army is beginning to be weakened by desertion; and for a long time there has not been a day when they did not come over by companies, bringing their arms with them. Most of them volunteer for the service, and they are distributed around among the English regiments. The general allows each deserter sixteen *piastres* for his arms, which is one more incentive to induce them to desert." By the first of June, the number of deserters was said to have grown to 3,000.

As nothing more important was happening during the winter months, Donop reported on the trivial experiences of daily life. On St. George's Day (April 23), Sir George Osborn, the Inspector General of Troops, invited the officers to a joint celebration which was made all the more pleasant by his courteous treatment of them. The young ladies of the region also appeared there, Horn's five sisters especially noticeable among them. The Hessian Captain Ewald returned the compliment by giving a "sylvan fête" on May 5. The American troops in the vicinity heard of it, and sent an officer under flag of truce "to carry letters addressed to certain inhabitants of Brunswick, but letters which were of no importance," according to Donop. "This," continued the colonel, "led us to suspect that this officer had been sent [only] to see what sort of condition our corps was in on the day of the celebration, in order to play some trick on us. He was greatly surprised, when they unblindfolded him, to find himself in a tent where there were assembled all the pretty girls in this [part of the] country, [and] a table well served. He was completely undeceived, as the rebels had got the idea that we were destitute of everything. We showed him every civility and politeness [and obliged him] to stay until the following day; but to be doubly sure, we sent a detachment of a hundred grenadiers that evening to reinforce the chasseurs [in the outposts]."⁴

⁴ The colonel was evidently not unmindful of what had happened at Trenton, nor likely to be caught off his guard as Rall had been.

Another incident reported by Donop throws a similar ray of light upon the chivalrous spirit that prevailed between the actual combatants although they were officially at war. On May 8, General Heyster sent Captain O'Reilley with a letter to Washington, requesting his permission "to send money and other things to our prisoners, whose officers are at Dumfries in Virginia and the soldiers at Lancaster in Pennsylvania." Although O'Reilley was ordered to deliver the letter only to Washington personally, he was permitted to go only as far as the headquarters of Lord Stirling, eight miles away from Washington's. Lord Stirling made every effort to entertain him as well as possible; "but wine and everything else essential to good cheer being so rare among the rebels, he could regale him with nothing better than *grogge* and salt beef." A few days later, Heyster received a very polite reply from Washington granting his request. Yet in spite of such courtesies shown one another by the troops, there were incidents enough that showed the gruesome character of partisan warfare in all its ugliness.

Early in June the Hessian troops were ordered to embark; and great was their curiosity to know where the voyage would take them. In April Donop had thought that the army of the north with the Brunswickers under Burgoyne would complete the passage of Lake Champlain in May; and now he was sure that Lord Howe would hurry north to join Burgoyne's army, "to exterminate the inhabitants of that province [New England], as the authors of the rebellion." "This will be the best way to restore order," he wrote, "for mere professions of good will are worthless. I doubt that we have found up to now one true friend of the king. As these people are extremely fond of comfort and pleasure, it would be wiser to use some severity with them." However the secret of the army's objective was so well guarded, even from the senior officers, that Donop wrote on July 14: "God knows whether we shall go south or north, but the heat which is beginning to make itself felt with the approach of the dog-days makes one wish that the general would choose the north rather than the south." But at last the inconceivable happened. Lord Howe gave the order to sail south and, after a voyage of four weeks, landed his troops at the mouth of the Elk river. Donop and his associates thought it quite useless for him to fight an independent campaign merely to gain possession of Philadelphia. Only the future, wrote the colonel, could show "whether our present expedition in the south

is more useful on the whole than if General Howe had turned north instead and had joined Burgoyne."

That unfavorable opinion of Howe's military leadership was even more boldly expressed in his last letter to the prince, dated Head of Elk, September 2, 1777:

If I dared to tell you what I think of our present situation, I should say outright that our expedition into these parts of the south is not to my liking. For if, instead of coming here, we had set sail for New England and joined Burgoyne's army, we should without fail have forced that province and its capitol to return to their duty before the end of this month and, by so doing, have put an end to the war in that section of the north; our army would have been spared the excessive heat that it has been compelled to endure; and it would have operated in New England with eight battalions more, for it could have been joined by the eight battalions that are on Red Island [Rhode Island: *sur l'Isle de Rothe*]. Burgoyne's corps would not have suffered the reverse that Colonel Baum did, with 1200 Brunswickers and 300 British [at Bennington?]. Our army could easily have repulsed that of Washington if he had tried to follow us and to cross the North [Hudson] River. More than that, we could have driven him back across the Delaware and before winter have chased him right into Virginia. For judging from all appearances, he would not have dared to risk a battle against an army that would have been 35,000 strong.

That way I think we should have had one of the most glorious campaigns, and perhaps peace before the end of it. For if all the provinces from Quebec to Virginia were cleared of rebels, the rest would be utterly lost unless they sought pardon and made peace.

At present I cannot think of our army as anything but a flying corps that is doing a dangerous thing in entering a region where it will be entirely surrounded by the enemy, who need not worry about it much, knowing that it will very soon have to abandon its position. The outcome will show whether I am mistaken.

Washington has his force on the heights of Wilmington, but has at the same time two intermediate posts, one of 700 men on the iron mountains and another of 4,000 who are supposed to be intrenched near Christianbrück [Christiania?]. His whole force is said to amount to 40,000 men. It may be that strong, [too,] for the rebel race has greatly increased of late. In the meanwhile, I hope that they will stay where they are, and that we—(I mean the English)—may be a bit more closely drawn together for the attack. For unless we are, I cannot yet reassure myself that infantry with its files four feet apart can capture intrenchments by escalade, or hold its ground against cavalry,—of which the rebels have far more than we; and judging by all appearances, it is not at all bad, either. We have allowed the rebels too much time in which to become soldiers. They are drilled by French officers; and I am none too sure how our general is going to get himself out of this affair.

If Washington should decide to make a quick advance upon us,—for two days now General Knyphausen has been detached with three brigades, and half of the Sixteenth Regiment of dragoons [are] on the left bank of the Elk river in the County of Delaware [*sic*],—it would be impossible for us to

re-assemble this side of Christianbrück. Washington would find nothing to prevent him from falling either upon us or upon Knyphausen's corps; so I hope that we shall move as soon as possible and get possession of Christianbrück before the enemy gets his eyes open.

Above all, my genuine affection for the Howe brothers leads me to hope that our campaign will be successful, and that our present expedition has been undertaken by explicit order [of their government], so that they are in no way responsible for it. For they are, both of them, certainly persons of exceptional merit.

For lack of time, I am unable for the moment to send Your Royal Highness the various maps. I shall take the liberty of doing that by the first vessel. Meanwhile, Monseigneur, permit me to place myself at your feet . . . etc.

P.S. We have just at this moment received orders to march at four o'clock tomorrow morning. The enclosed proclamation will show that perhaps a bit too much humanity is being shown the rebels.

Donop's chasseurs constituted a part of the advance-guard when Howe started to push on toward Philadelphia, and saw a good deal of action as the campaign progressed; but the colonel met his fate before he had time to write a further report of their activities. In order to open the mouth of the Delaware, the attacking force had to get possession of Fort Mercer at Red Bank on the east side of the river. Donop volunteered for the task, although he knew that only a weak force would be at his disposal for it. His attempt to take it by storm was repulsed with murderous losses. Twenty-two officers fell there, among them the commander of every battalion, and Donop himself. Just as he had said, infantry with its files four feet apart could not take breast-works by escalade.

Only a little more than a year had passed since the ambitious young officer had first set foot on American soil, where he was to have become a famous soldier and make himself worthy of his chosen royal lord. In the bitter school of experience he had learned at last that the American war was no mere military demonstration in which fame was to be had cheap. Yet he had given a good account of himself in every way, displaying both prudence and valor.

He left a reliable written record of his disapproval of the Howes' strategy, of lack of confidence in Sir William's generalship (which detracted nothing from his personal loyalty to him), and of a growing professional respect for General Washington and the Continental army. But if, on his deathbed, he cursed the avarice of his own sovereign as he was alleged to have done, or questioned why he had chosen to come so far to fight in a war which did not concern him, he was then giving voice to an idea quite inconsistent with those which he

had been habitually committing to paper. With his background and training, he could not have been expected to realize that he was fighting for a lost cause, that the Americans were something more than "rebels" who would and of course should be suppressed, or that a policy of "greater severity" in suppressing them would not have provided a simple and satisfactory answer to the problem of their relations with Great Britain. Perhaps Fate's worst unkindness to him, after all (if the story told by Chastellux is even approximately true), was in letting him live long enough after he received his mortal wound to reach even a partial realization of the significance of what he and his compatriots were doing. If he had died instantly when hit, he need never have ceased to think himself a hero.

HANS HUTH