During the summer and early autumn of 1776 Connolly had been manifestly too ill to care very much where he was. Moreover, the fact that his wife was with him, unwilling attendant though she was, probably aided him in whiling away the tedium of his long hours in prison. By November 7th, though, the old urge for freedom again asserted itself in a letter to Congress, who turned it over to the Committee on Prisoners without comment. (1) For a few days thereafter his attention was wholly occupied with the furor created by the attempted escape of his three friends, Smyth, Cameron, and McLean.

These men were confined on the upper floor of the prison. One night in the early part of December, they succeeded in cutting, with only a knife as a tool, a hole through the roof. This gave them access to the top of the building, from whence, by means of a rope made of old blankets and mattress coverings, they planned to descend. Cameron, the most venturesome, was the first to attempt the hazardous feat. He had scarcely started before the rotten materials of which the rope was made, gave away, and he fell nearly fifty feet to the ground. As he suffered broken ankles and a badly shaken frame, he was transferred to a hospital. His two confederates, however, were thrown into the dungeon, where they remained until they were transferred to Baltimore, (3) about the middle of the month.

Other prisoners were sent to that city at the same time owing to the approach of the British Forces. An order was issued that Connolly should be among the number, (4) but for some reason it was never carried out. (5) Connolly himself may have been partly responsible, for, having heard a rumor that he and other inmates were to be moved, he made the following request, December 11th, of the Committee of Safety:

Amidst the multiplicity of your concerns, permit me to demand your attention for a moment. Engaged as I have been in this un-
happy national contest, it has been my misfortune to have experienced a very long and rigorous confinement, highly aggravated by constant sickness, the effects of this complicated distress, has reduced me to the lowest condition, and it may be thought expedient, to remove me from hence, indiscriminately with other sufferers, to partake with them the inclemency of some Frontier Jail, without any Regard to my very infirm state. I have taken the Liberty to request your interposition in my favor, supposing it may be in the line of your Department, to alleviate the afflictions of those who are your Prisoners, and at your disposal. As I require nothing inconsistent with your own safety, I flatter myself you will be pleased to give such directions with regard to me, as may be correspondent with the feelings of humanity. (6)

Two members of the Committee who came to see him agreed to let him travel southward by carriage on parole, but they never kept their promise. Eventually he was the only one remaining in the prison. (7)

This solitude could not have been very pleasant, and the fact that he had been in close confinement since the attempted escape of his three friends, had not improved his health. Accordingly, on December 23rd, he asked the Committee of Safety for a little more freedom:

I am sorry to give you such repeated troubles, but my wretched condition will plead my apology, immured within a solitary room, & shut off from every social intercourse with mankind, it must be acknowledged is a punishment, highly afflicting and scarcely tolerable to the most vigorous constitutions; but enfeebled as I am by constant disorder, & the mind participating of my bodily infirmity, has sunk into the deepest melancholy, & has reduced me to so deplorable a state, that words can but faintly communicate any adequate idea of my feelings. As a Prisoner I looked for restriction upon my personal liberty, but I cannot imagine it was ever meant to extend to an entire deprivation of either life or health.

This building constructed upon Principles of humanity, would give me some relief was I allowed the privilege of walking in the day time, & I do assure you I shall attempt no advantage from such indulgence. Permit me to request the favor of you, to lay my request before the Board, & I trust every humane heart will agree with you, that there is nothing immoderate or exceptionable in my request. (8)

But his plea had no effect for he was left to endure his solitary confinement as best he could until his stepbrother, James Ewing, now a General in the American Forces, came to command at Philadelphia. (10)

Through the influence of this officer, Connolly was able to secure his long-desired parole. This was granted about the middle of January, 1777, after the General had agreed to answer for his brother's appearance whenever it was demanded. Connolly was then permitted to go to his brother's home in the country, near Wrightsville, where he was allowed to ride five miles in any direction each day in an at-
tempt to recover his health. Without doubt this freedom was an inestimable boon to the sick man after an imprisonment of fourteen months. (12)

But his joy was comparatively short-lived. On the 14th of February the Committee of Safety decided he would be less dangerous behind the walls of the prison. The order for his return was therefore dispatched to General Ewing, then at home, who received the letter on February 19th (13) However, Connolly could not set out until the 23rd, for reasons best explained by himself in a letter of the 25th to the Committee, sent on ahead with his servant to explain his tardiness:

Immediately on the order of the Council of Safety being communicated to me, I should have set out without loss of time for Philada., but by continual indisposition & the lameness of one of my Horses, together with the extreme bad Weather, rendered it impossible for me to manifest a readier obedience, than by setting out upon the 23d. Fully acquainted with the violent prejudices & groundless reports equally disadvantageous, I have thought proper to dispatch my servant before me, in order to acquaint you, that I am so far advanced upon my journey; apprehensive that a day or two longer delay might give rise to some unfavorable impression, the more expedition in my present state of health I am really incapable to make. (14)

Whatever may have occasioned an alteration in Opinion with regard to me, I can truly assert, it could not possibly have originated from any thing either transacted or expressed by me. Conscious of nothing which can merit resentment from you, I shall submit to what ever may be determined upon in my case, with all the patience which my enfeebled constitution will afford. (14)

With him he bore a letter from General Ewing to substantiate his own story. The missive is interesting in that it includes the writer's rather fair-minded—in spite of his relationship—view of his brother's case. Addressed to Thomas Wharton, it reads:

Dr. Sir:

I received yours of the 14th, but not before the 19th Instant. My unfortunate Brother would have set off immediately to deliver himself up to the Council of Safety, agreeable to the order therein contained, but was prevented by a Lameness in one of his Horses. I hope three or Four Days added to his short enlargem't will not increase the Ungenerous Clamours rais'd against him by the prosecuting Populace. His case is certainly a Very hard One; many people fully as Culpable as him, (and as Void of Honnour,) has been Enlarged on their Parole, all which, I find, is to be denied him, tho' Backed with High Security. I am confident he has not violated the Engagements entered into; which makes receiving the Indulgence he has lately met with appear still Harder.

My knowledge of you, Sir, & Several others of the Gentlemen of the Council, whose sentiments would lead them to acts of humanity induces me to expect that my Brother will meet w't all the Indul-
gence necessary for the recovery of his lost Health.

I would be glad to have the recognizance I entered into on his account sent me; it can be no longer binding, and of course Useless to your Council (15)

James Ewing.

Connolly arrived in Philadelphia on the evening of the 26th and went at once to report to the Committee of Safety but found that they had adjourned. He, therefore, determined
to call again the next morning but at that time found himself to be so ill that he could not leave his room. To explain his absence he wrote a note to the Committee stating his condition, and averring his desire to follow their directions though he hoped that nothing definite would be decided upon until he was better. (16) He was doubtless much chagrined and somewhat surprised when he received
an answer recommitting him to prison. There he was to remain for six weeks more with the privilege, however, of walking in the yard of the jail during the day. (17)

But negotiations were started almost at once to secure his release once more. Dr. Rush, having visited him to ascertain the seriousness of his condition, reported to Congress on March 9th:

I visited Major Connolly yesterday, and found him still so much disordered that I fear nothing will effectually cure him but such exercise as cannot easily be had within the enclosure of the Jail. Riding on horseback, I believe, is the only remedy that will remove the cause of his disorder, which is occasioned entirely by a relaxation of his nerves. (18)

General Ewing exerted his influence also. On March 29th he wrote to a General Robeardau, then a member of Congress:

D'r Sir:
The inclosed letter which I rec'd from my Unfortunate Brother will be a sufficient apology (to a person of your Humanity) for the liberty I am about to take. I could not expect, after what I have heard you say concerning him, that you would Interest yourself in his Favour, unless the present situation, (Which I believe he has not Exaggerated) should plead for him.

If the Congress should incline to Indulge him, in the manner that he says he has reasons to hope, and will take his own parole, which I am certain might be relied on, I am ready to enter into any reasonable Engagement for him.

Your moving in Congress to consider his case and afford him the Effected reliefe will lay me under the greatest Obligation. (19)

James Ewing.

These efforts brought action. On April 5th, Congress resolved, "That the case of Dr. Connolly be committed to the Supreme executive council of the State of Pennsylvania;
to whom it be recommended to examine into the matter, and, if they think proper, indulge the prisoner with such liberty as they shall conceive to be consistent with the public safety." (20) But the Supreme Executive Council had anticipated the wishes of Congress. On the 2nd of April, this body had decided that—

John Connolly, a prisoner confined in the Gaol of this City, be permitted to retire to the Plantation of James Ewing, Esq., giving security himself in Two Thousand Pounds, and Two Freeholders in One Thousand Pounds each, this Security being given for his good behaviour, and that he will continue within five miles of the same, viz: That John Connolly do not either write to, speak or correspond with any person or persons whatsoever, employed by or under the Authority of the King or Parliament of Great Britain, nor to or with any person or persons unfriendly to the United States of America, knowing them to be such, nor take up Arms, or employ or procure any other person or persons to take up Arms against the said States, or aid or assist the Enemies thereof in any sort whatsoever, nor do or say any matter or thing, directly or indirectly, which in any wise is or may be injurious to the said States or any of them: And that the said John Connolly do confine himself on the Plantation of the above named James Ewing, and within five miles of the said Plantation, situated in the County of York, and the same whereon the said James Ewing now dwells, and that he, the John Connolly, shall be and appear before the Supreme Executive Council of the Commonwealth, when thereto he shall be required, then the above obligation shall be void, or otherwise remain in full force and virtue. (21)

One can imagine Connolly's jubilation when he read this resolution. He immediately sent off the bonds to his brother who graciously signed and returned them, with the accompanying letter, April 4th:

Dr Brother,

I have signed the bond agreeable to Law, after striking out the words (and severally) which words, would make the security double what I enter'd into in the last Recognizance. I cant think that there was any intention to make me liable for the whole sum, should you act unworthily, But rather conclude as them words ware printed in the Blank that they escaped the Secretary's notice.

I shall expect you early next week, Archy says he will be in Philadelphia on Sunday, & I would not advise you to stay any time in Town after your Releas

I am

Dr Brother

Affectionately yours,

James Ewing (22)

On the 7th, Connolly transmitted the bonds to the Council with a note to President Wharton apologizing for the mistake which his brother had made in amending their phrasing:

I herewith transmit to your Excellency the Obligations signed by my Brother, who has mistakenly struck out the words & severally
as judging it rendering Him liable for double the sum which He had entered into in the last Recognizance, the mistake your Excellency will observe to be his, from his letter which I here beg leave also to send. If your Excellency & the Council think it indispensably necessary to have these words inserted, I flatter myself it will not prevent my setting out from hence; & I shall have another of the nature required, sent down by the first opportunity. I hope that the state of my health, & past sufferings will induce your Excellency to obviate any objection which might be alleged, in consequence of his mistake will greatly add to the civilities already received from your Excellency.

I have the honor to be
Your Excellency's most obed t Serv t
Jno. Connolly

N. B. I shall engage to send the Bond down by Express in any number of days required, if judged necessary. (23)

On the day that this note was written Congress, fearing that they had been too precipitate in their resolution of April 5th, (24) ordered that it should be suspended. (25) But the Supreme Council, having taken over the case and solved it to the best of their ability, declared, in their report given later the same day, that “John Connolly having given Bail for his good behaviour & appearance before the Council when called upon, was ordered to be enlarged.” (26) At any rate, it was the latter order which Connolly obeyed. (27)

On April 11th, 1777, he once again came to his brother’s home. We know nothing of his life here but it must have been exceedingly pleasant to have even that freedom, after his long months in prison. All through that summer and early autumn he sought to regain his health, but was not wholly successful as will later appear. As the days passed, he anxiously hoped against hope that he might be exchanged. (28) In this he was doomed to disappointment. As the British were closing in on Philadelphia in October, Congress decided it was best to decamp. Not wishing to leave Connolly behind to concoct more mischief, they resolved, on the 13th, “That it would be inconsistent with the public safety to permit Dr. John Connolly, at present a prisoner on parole, to remain any longer at large, and, therefore, that the Board of War be directed to order him into safe custody immediately, taking care to seize such of his papers as may be of a political nature”. (29) Accordingly, on the night of the 14th, Connolly was once more apprehended. From his brother’s house, he was hurried to the Yorktown prison where he was “close locked up, and every former severity renewed”. As he was conscious of having done nothing to deserve this treatment, he looked for an
early release as soon as his innocence was proved, but this turned out to be another vain hope. (30)

The change from wholesome country life to that of wearisome prison routine was too great to be suffered in silence for very long. Early in December Connolly felt impelled to petition Congress for leniency, but his letter, read before that body on the 4th, was dismissed without action. (31) After this rebuff Connolly remained silent for over five monotonous and enervating months. Then, on May 17, 1778, with the concurrence of several other prisoners, he wrote again, setting forth their causes for complaint. Attention was called to their continued incarceration when others had been exchanged. Their abode was described as “a loathsome, crowded jail infected with a contagious fever, and polluted with noisome smells through every part”. They, themselves, were “subject to all the indignities, and low insults, of an illiberal gaoler and turnkey, and placed upon the same footing with horse-thieves, deserters, negroes, and the lowest and most despicable of the human race”. It concluded with a request for parole, if they were not to be exchanged. (32) The letter was read in Congress, on May 19th, and referred to the Board of War which was to ascertain the truth of Connolly’s allegations and report. (33)

Both Connolly’s letter and the report of the Board of War were, on May 23rd, the day the latter was given, ordered, by Congress, to be published. (34) The Board of War had in the meantime visited the Yorktown prison and, apparently, had been very favorably impressed with its condition. “In the gaol at York”, they said, “these prisoners (seven only in number) have two airy rooms; the one fifteen by twenty feet, and the other something less, besides the privilege of the whole gaol yard, which is sixty yards long, and eighteen wide . . . . frequently swept, and kept clean as possible, and by no means polluted with filth, &c., there being a privy at the extreme end of the yard. These gentlemen, too, have three servants to attend them . . . . their complaints, then, of being confined in a loathsome, crowded prison, infected with a contagious fever, and polluted with noisome smells through every part, are not warranted by facts”. They asserted that the jail was never crowded and that, at the present time, there were only nine privates there and three of these were servants of the of-
ficers, though the building was capable of holding "conveniently, one hundred and sixty prisoners". As to contagious fever, there had been a few cases some time ago, but these had been removed to hospitals; five soldiers, it was true, now had fevers which were due to lack of exercise and other causes common to places of confinement, but were not contagious. They accused Connolly of having a tendency to misrepresent affairs and cited one instance, when, after a complaint of his, a Dr. Shippen had visited him and found "his situation was directly opposite to his representation". The report was concluded by advising "that these gentlemen should be more strictly confined", as there was danger of them escaping. (35)

Connolly, in his Narrative, disputes the fairness of the above report in words to which some credence must be given:

Nothing can have a greater appearance of dispassionate candour, if we accept the expression Tories, than this report; yet nothing was ever more abundant in chicane and deceit. On the 17th of May, the date of our letter, the gaol was exactly, literally in the state we represented it to be: on the 23d of the same month it was what their report affirms. But, in the interim, so industrious were they to give their proceedings every appearance of truth, as well as of humanity, one hundred and fifty privates had been sent away, some of the sick removed, the gaol yard thoroughly cleaned, and our rooms whitewashed. They then, with an ostentatious formality, examined the prison, and made their report. (36)

Calm judgment finds Connolly's version the more credible of the two, for it is difficult to understand why a group of officers would so weaken their case by distorting facts which they could not prove if called upon to do so. Connolly also attacks Dr. Shippen's statement of his condition, for he writes,

. . . . that when this visitation was made, I had lost my appetite: had an incessant watchfulness: was reduced to a skeleton: had blisters upon my neck; was incapable of walking across the room; and, for the two preceding nights, my brother officers had very humanely sat up with me. That melancholy and hypochondria should be generated in such a situation is not to be wondered at. (37)

After the Board of War had made its report contradicting every assertion of Connolly and his fellow prisoners, the latter group realized that it was useless to contend further for leniency. Consequently, they consoled themselves as best they could with their freshened quarters and bided their time. Not long after the British Army had evacuated Philadelphia Connolly received an official com-
munication that he was to be exchanged. His relief was momentary for immediately following that order came another from the Board of War forbidding the execution of the former. Then, towards the end of July, his hopes were again raised when a letter came from the American Commissary General of Prisoners saying that he and his brother officers were to be immediately forwarded to Elizabethtown to be exchanged. He writes: "I was now admitted to my parole (be pleased to observe) as a prisoner of war, and obtained passport for myself and servant to Philadelphia". When he arrived in that city he reported at once to the Deputy Commissary of Prisoners. This official asked him to take lodgings for a day or so before proceeding and Connolly acquiesced. When he waited upon that gentleman at the expiration of the required time he was informed that he was to be again confined, by order of Congress, "for a few days, in the new gaol until that body had more properly considered of the admission" of his exchange. No opportunity to protest was given, for there was an officer waiting to escort him to the jail. Thus, on August 5, 1778, he became, for the third time, an inmate of the Philadelphia prison. (38) He did not tamely submit, however, but wrote the inevitable petition to Congress asking for his exchange. But Congress was adamant and, on August 28th, it was—

Ordered, unanimously, by all the thirteen states, that the commissary general of prisoners be directed not to consent to the exchange of John Connolly, calling himself a lieutenant colonel in the British service, without the special order of Congress. (39)

It was shortly after this refusal that Connolly became involved in an affair that led to close confinement. About the latter part of August or the first of September there appeared in Philadelphia a Dr. Berkenhout, a Tory from New York. In some way he aroused the suspicion of the patriots and was imprisoned, on September 3rd, (40) in the same jail with Connolly. During the nine days he was there, he and Connolly had some long talks, (41) and doubtless Connolly told him of his frustrated plans for the invasion of the west. Berkenhout suggested that he join Col. Butler in the latter's border warfare, as soon as his, Connolly's exchange could be effected. This proposition, Connolly later averred, he declined to consider. (42)

In any case Berkenhout seems to have acted on the assumption that Connolly would do as he was advised. On
September 12th, (43) the Doctor's release was secured through the interposition of Mr. Richard H. Lee, (44) and he was ordered to be sent within the enemies lines near New York. As soon as he arrived in that city he made it a point to call upon Governor Johnstone and outline his plan. This was that all American prisoners out on parole should be recalled unless the American Congress agreed to exchange Connolly at once. The transfer having been accomplished in this manner, Connolly was to be sent to the assistance of Col. Butler. The plot was discovered by some means and the information was conveyed to Congress about November 17th. (46) who immediately ordered the jailer to lock Connolly in his room, place a sentinel at his door, and allow no one whatever to talk to him. As Connolly was wholly in the dark as to the recent developments in the case, he presumed that this close confinement was a prelude to his execution, but, since he was in such poor health, he writes, "this imagination gave far more pleasure than pain". It was six weeks before the fear of Congress was allayed and he was allowed to resume his walks in the jail yard. (47)

But weeks before this solitary imprisonment he had sent two letters of protest to Congress, both of which had been referred to the consideration of a committee. (48) Despairing of results in this direction, he had thrown himself on the mercy of General Washington in a letter of October 16th, but the General was too busy with other matters, apparently, and simply forwarded the missive to Congress, who referred it also, to the Committee considering Connolly's other letters. (49) Ultimately Connolly demanded to be heard, and Congress appointed a committee for that purpose. At the ensuing hearing it was brought out that Congress refused his parole because they feared he would break it even as Sir. John Johnson, now harrying the frontiers, had done. Moreover, they considered him more in the nature of a spy than a prisoner of war, since he was taken in no engagement. Connolly was taken back by this interpretation of his conduct, as he could see no reason for it, and tried hard to dispel their doubts but was not wholly successful. The hearing was concluded by the committee agreeing to reconsider his case, inasmuch as his health was exceedingly and visibly impaired, and leading him to hope that he might eventually be paroled if not exchanged. (50)
It seems that in September, probably after Berkenhout's arrival and report in New York, Joshua Loring, the British Commissary of Prisoners, had written to Congress threatening to retaliate upon an American prisoner of equal rank, for the mistreatment of Col. Connolly. (51) This letter had been turned over to the committee which had under its consideration Connolly's letters. This same committee had conducted the hearing above described. Thinking it had solved its problem the committee made its report to Congress on November 12th. It held that Mr. Loring's classification of Col. Connolly as a prisoner of war was not apt, for that officer was virtually a spy inasmuch as "he was not in arms; or at the head of any party of men in arms; but was clandestinely making his way to Detroit, in order to join, give intelligence to, and otherwise aid the garrison at that place". Moreover, it found that no demand had been made "till within these few months past by any British General for the release or exchange of Connolly. It was affirmed that his first parole in 1777 had been remanded because of his suspicious actions, but that, in spite of these, he had been granted a second parole to the home of his brother in the same year. It was claimed he had made two attempts to escape. It referred to his recent treatment when re-confined in the Philadelphia prison "where (excepting the space of about fourteen days, when two persons were necessarily obliged to sleep in the same room) he has had a separate and commodious apartment of his own choice, the privilege of his own servant to attend him constantly, and to bring him whatever he may require, and the unrestrained use of a spacious yard to take the air in, during the day". (52) On hearing this report Congress resolved that Connolly was not a prisoner of war but that he was "at the time he was apprehended, and still is, amenable to the law-martial, as a spy and emissary from the British army"; and that his grievances were not founded on fact. They, therefore requested General Washington to inform the Commander-in-Chief of the British forces in New York that if he mistreated an American Lieutenant-Colonel of the American Forces, they would retaliate on a British officer of the first rank in their possession. (53) On the next day, November 13th, Congress ordered that the "facts and resolutions relative to J. Connolly be published". (54) A fair judgment of this report will conclude that the com-
mittee adroitly twisted their information in order to retain Connolly as a spy and at the same time to prevent Mr. Loring's mistreatment of legitimate prisoners of war.

It was but a few days later that Congress received information of Berkenhout's scheme and, in consequence, ordered Connolly's close confinement. (55) He had not been long in solitary confinement before he "was suddenly attacked by a Cholera morbus" and continued for some months in a languishing state of health. (56) He nevertheless continued to bombard Congress with letters. (57)

... in the beginning of April, 1779, a certificate of my infirmities was signed by two of the most eminent physicians in Philadelphia, and sent by them to Congress, wherein they declared, that unless I was allowed the open air, I must fall a victim to imprisonment, on which I was allowed to ride four hours a day, within the limits of about two miles, but on my parole, obliged to return every night to confinement. It was intimated likewise, I should soon be sent to Reading and exchanged; but even the indulgence of riding in the open air was presently prohibited, and I was again shut up in prison". (58)

This curtailment of his liberty was probably due to some information—what it was is not recorded—contained in a letter which Congress received from the Board of War on April 23rd. However, they still permitted him to walk in the yard of the jail. (59)

Connolly's case must have assumed major importance at times. In the autumn of 1778 one committee had been devoted to a consideration of his affairs. (60) Now, April 27th, another committee was appointed for that purpose, consisting of Messrs. Richard Henry Lee, John Armstrong, and Roger Sherman. (61) As his letters and memorials continued to accumulate (62) Congress added two more members to the committee, Messrs. William Fleming and Frederick A. Muhlenberg. (63)

On July 14th, the committee, having completed its investigations, presented its report. It reads:

The committee to whom sundry letters and memorials of John Connolly, now a prisoner in the new Jail of this City, were referred having examined into the case of the said John Connolly, find that he is possessed of a commission signed by Lord Dunmore, and dated the fifth day of November, 1775, appointing him lieutenant colonel of a regiment called the Queen's rangers; and also a certificate signed H. Brooke, deputy superintendent general of the British forces, acknowledging lieutenant colonel Connolly's appointment, and that he had received his full subsistence to the 25th day of December, 1778;

Whereupon your committee beg leave to submit the following resolutions:
Resolved, that lieutenant colonel John Connolly, now a prisoner in the new jail in this city, be considered as a prisoner of war, any former resolution of Congress to the contrary notwithstanding.

Resolved, that the said lieutenant colonel Connolly be admitted to his parole, that he forthwith repair to such place, and be confined to such limits as the Board of War shall judge proper.

But Congress was not yet ready to take this step and consequently refused to give its assent to the resolution. This did not prevent Connolly from sending in more petitions, which he did on August 24th, and October 14th. Both of these were referred to the Board of War for consideration.

The Board of War was evidently much exasperated at being continually bothered with Connolly’s affairs, especially so since Congress had disapproved of their committee’s resolutions which would have solved the problem. They therefore, reported in the following manner, on October 30th:

Lt. Col. Connolly has again and again petitioned Congress for permission to be enlarged on his parole, for the benefit of his health. Those petitions have often been referred to this board; but tho’ directed to take orders thereon, we could yield him no relief, as it was not, nor is yet determined, that he is a prisoner of war; and consequently we could not take his parole. Heretofore the enemy would have exchanged one of our Lieut. Colonels for him: could this still be effected, we humbly conceive it the most eligible measure that can be taken: Whatever danger might formerly have been apprehended from his influence and artifices among the Indians (in case he had been released) we believe that now the grounds of such apprehensions are removed. We therefore beg leave to report.

Lieutenant Colonel J. Connolly having made frequent applications to be liberated and exchanged; therefore, in consideration of his long captivity and confinement.

Resolved, That the commissary general of prisoners be authorized to exchange Lieutenant Colonel J. Connolly for any lieutenant colonel in the army of the United States, who is now a prisoner to the enemy. (67)

After some debate in which it was shown: that General Sullivan had intimidated Colonel Butler and his Indian auxiliaries; that Connolly’s health “was in a manner irreparably impaired”; and that the future of the war seemed to appear more favorable for the colonies, Congress finally approved, November 17th, the resolution of the Board of War. (68)

Accordingly, a few days later Connolly was liberated on his parole and sent to Germantown, where he remained until July 4th, 1780. Doubtless he spent these months in trying to recover his health. It may be, also, that he
spent part of his time wooing the widow of Samuel Wellington, of Delaware, his first wife having either died or divorced him. This lady he may have married before he was finally exchanged, but nothing is definitely known in the matter. (70) In fact, of his correspondence, if he wrote any letters at all during the seven month's parole, only one letter could be procured, and this not very informative. It was written February 10, 1780, to the President of the Supreme Executive Council:

Sir:

When I was favored with enlargement in January 1777, I was farther obliged by the restoration of my side-arms & pistols. Toward the conclusion of March I returned to Philadelphia, pursuant to an order from the Executive Council, & was very unexpectedly recommitted to close confinement. My arms, which, at this time, had been brought to the City by my servant to be cleaned, were left at my lodgings, at which place a disabled Officer then lay, who, taking upon Himself to send my Portmanteau to the New Jail, thought proper to retain the Articles mentioned, together with a Deed of Partition, then in my custody also. Sometime subsequent to this conduct, it seems He attempted to escape, in which He failed, & was again made Prisoner, when being possessed of my arms & the Deed alluded to, they were, I understand, taken from Him, & given into the charge of the Honorable the Executive Council.

This being the real estate of Facts, & having done nothing personally since the period of my captivity, to have forfeited the intended civility, I flatter myself your Excellency will be pleased to order them restored. I should not have attempted to intrude so far upon your Excellency's more important Concerns, were not the Pistols a present from a very particular Friend, which alone renders me solicitous for their Recovery. (71)

John Connolly

It is likely that Connolly obtained his pistols, else, persistent man that he was, we would surely have had on record a number of other letters to the President of the Council.

In any case he was directed, on July 4th, to set off for New York, there to negotiate his own exchange on the following conditions: that he secure the liberty of the American Lt.-Col. Ramsay in exchange for himself; (72) that he would return to captivity within one month if he did not succeed in effecting the desired exchange; and that he would pledge his word and sacred honor not, directly or indirectly, to say or do anything injurious to the United States of America, or armies thereof, but would conduct himself as a prisoner of war should. (73) After taking oath that he would adhere to these stipulations, Connolly hastened away to New York. On his arrival Col. Ramsay was immediately allowed to proceed to the American lines
on parole. The final adjustment of the exchange was not completed until October 25, 1780, thus lacking but one month of rounding out a five-year period in which Connolly had been under the control of Congress and much of the time in prison. (74)

Connolly still cherished his plans for invading the colonies from the west, so, soon after he had acquired his liberty, he planned to do just what Congress had always feared he might do if he were exchanged. To Sir Henry Clinton he proposed that he be permitted to attack some of the outposts on the frontier of the middle colonies, possess himself of Pittsburgh, fortify the passes of the Allegheny Mountains, and then, with his Provincial troops and Indian auxiliaries, act as emergencies might require. Clinton approved of this scheme, but, since Connolly would have had to go by way of the St. Lawrence River, it was decided that he would arrive at the scene of action too late in the year to carry out the program. Consequently, it was postponed for the time being. (75)

In the spring of 1781, the project must have been reconsidered. By some means General Washington obtained information of the plot and sent a warning to the President of Congress on April 25th, in which he said, in part:

Since my letter of the 14th to your Excellency on the subject of an immediate supply of Provision for Fort Pitt, I have received the following intelligence thro' a good channel which makes the measure I then recommended more indispensably necessary, "Colonel Connolly with his corps to proceed to Quebec as soon as possible to be joined in Canada by Sir John Johnson with a number of Tories and Indians said to amount to three thousand. This route to be by Buck Island Lake Ontario and Venango. And his object is Fort Pitt and all the adjacent posts. Connolly takes with him a number of Commissions for persons now residing at Pittsburgh and several hundred men at that place have agreed to join to make prisoners of Colonel Brodhead and all friends. His (Conolly's) great influence in that Country will it is said enable him to prevail upon the Indians and Inhabitants to assist the British in any Measure." The latter part of this Intelligence agrees exactly with a discovery which Col. Brodhead has lately made of correspondence between persons at Fort Pitt and the Commandant of Detroit, some of whom have been seized by him. I have immediately communicated the above intelligence to Col. Brodhead and have directed him to secure or remove every suspected person in the vicinity of his post. (76)

Congress made but little haste in complying with the General's urgent request, for even as late as June 3rd, Fort Pitt was still badly in need of provisions. (77) Nor did the people of the surrounding country seem to be greatly agitated by Washington's information, even when it cor-
robated rumors they had already heard. General George Rogers Clark, writing from that post to his Commander-in-Chief, on May 21st, says:

I am well acquainted with Col. Connely and should be happy to meet him on Equal terms, If his dependence is principally on Indians and we should fortunately get into the field before him he will probably meet with a disappointm't. But should he be Independent of them our circumstances will be truly deplorable, Except we had other means of drawing the Inhabitants of the country to the field besides persuasive arguments which is too much our dependence at present. (78)

And in a letter to Thomas Jefferson, on May 23rd, he wrote:

Gen'l Washington informs me that he had Recieved information that Col° Connely had left new york with a design to make a diversion in these Countries to be Reinforced by Sir John Johnson in Kanady, I doubt S'r we shall as usial be obliged to play a desperate gaim this campaign, If we had the 2,000 men first proposed such Intelligance would give me pleasure. (79)

Had Connolly been able to have attacked Fort Pitt during the summer of 1781, he might have been successful. But, in the autumn, General William Irvine assumed command, and put the old fort in a suitable condition for withstanding an assault, as he still feared that Connolly might undertake his proposed expedition. (80)

As a matter of fact Connolly had given up the contemplated campaign and, at the very time Washington was sending the warning to Congress, he was lying ill in New York. It is true that he had been trying to assemble a regiment in that city but his recruits had been relatively few. Finally Clinton requested him to join Lord Cornwallis in the south. This Connolly agreed to do in spite of his illness and the effect which, he knew, the hot climate would have upon his already weakened constitution. Before setting off for his new service, Clinton confirmed him in his rating of Lieutenant-Colonel. On his arrival at his destination Lord Cornwallis, therefore, placed him in command of the Virginia and North Carolina Loyalists and a detachment of York Volunteers. With this body of men he was ordered to move down to Back River. But he had not moved his force five miles toward his objective before he was halted and told that, since the French fleet had arrived, he was to return to the vicinity of Yorktown. (81)

As he had suspected, this soldiering in the south proved too much for his weakened body to endure. In his frail condition he could not withstand the bad effects of excess-
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ive fatigue, noxious water, dying horses and the "putrescent effluvia" therefrom. Consequently, he soon fell ill. He tells us that, "Lying in the field brought on a dysentery; I was obliged to go into quarters, and the disorder turned to a debilitating diarrhoea, that reduced me to almost the last extremity. Remaining in the town was certain death; and the only remedy was change of air." Some Loyalists living on the peninsula between Chesapeake Bay and the James River invited him to their homes, and, Lord Cornwallis having granted permission, he decided to accept of their hospitality, though he says he realized the danger of falling into colonial hands. (82)

The home to which he intended to go was twelve or thirteen miles from Yorktown. (83) Being incapable of riding horseback, he set out in a sulky attended by two servants. On the way he encountered his prospective host, who requested that he stop at a neighboring home until he, the host, had returned. Connolly did as desired, but towards evening he set out again alone. He had not proceeded far before three men, with fixed bayonets, rushed out of a thicket and made prisoners of himself and one of the servants. His captors led him into a pine wood near by where, fearing a rescue, they remained till night. With the coming of darkness, they took him, by secret roads, to Newport News. He expected to be permitted to rest long before reaching this place but the three men insisted that he must be taken to General Washington who was then at Williamsburg, as soon as possible. And, unmoved by his condition, they drove him along. Connolly maintains that this harsh treatment probably saved his life, "for the air, or exercise, or both, had such an effect upon me, that when I was put to bed, I slept upwards of three hours; a refreshment to which I had been long a stranger." (84)

After this rest at Newport News he was put on a whale boat and taken out to the French ship, Armee en Flute, where the officers treated him very kindly. On the next day he was set on shore and taken to General Lincoln, who was very courteous and allowed him to ride his horse on the journey to Washington's headquarters. On the way thither he encountered the General and was received in a cold and distant manner. Connolly records: "I can only say the friendly sentiments he once publicly professed for me, no longer existed. He ordered me to be conducted to the
Marquis de la Fayette's quarters." The Marquis gave him "every civility and attention," and entertained him for three days. (85)

At the expiration of this period an order was received from Washington commanding him to be sent sixty miles back into the country to Hanover. (86) At this place he was retained until after the surrender of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown. Then on hearing that British officers, prisoners, were to be allowed to go to New York, he wrote the American Commissary General but got no satisfactory answer. Nor was a similar letter to General Washington of any avail. At last the Governor of Virginia, being importuned, gave him permission to go to Philadelphia (87) and submit himself to the keeper of the prisoners there. This he did and arrived in the city on December 12th. He immediately reported to the Board of War and asked to be allowed to proceed to New York. (88)

However, his deliverance was not to be so easily or quickly effected. The Secretary of the Board of War prevailed upon him to take lodgings for a time until his freedom could be properly secured. But the Supreme Executive Council was reluctant to allow Connolly to depart and managed, on December 28th, to concoct a reason for detaining him. They first issued an order commanding him to appear before them for an examination. At his hearing they contrived to establish, to their satisfaction, that he had violated his parole given in the State of Virginia and was now in Philadelphia without permission. Whereupon, they "Resolved, That the said John Connolly be committed to the common gaol of the city and county of Philadelphia, and there Safely kept, until delivered by due course of law, he being a person whose going at large is dangerous to the public welfare and safety". (89) On December 31st, they even imprisoned his servant, James Lewis, charging that the latter was a deserter from the Continental Army. (90)

Connolly's horror at contemplating prison life once more can well be imagined. In his desperation he again turned to Washington. But the General was much aggrieved to learn that his prisoner had left Virginia and, for a time, insisted that he should return. But Connolly would not willingly yield to this, preferring instead to remain in prison in Philadelphia. And there he did remain until March 1, 1782. Then, through the influence of friends,
he was at length permitted to go to New York, provided he went from thence to Europe. He readily agreed to abide by the stipulation and was soon on his way to New York where he arrived on March 11th, once more a free man. (91)

FOOTNOTES
1 *Am. Archives, 5th series*, III, 1563; also *Journals of the Continental Congress, VI*, 931.
9 Concerning this man, I. D. Rupp, in *Hist. of Lancaster Co.*, p. 267, says that it was said of him that, "He died without an enemy."  
11 Ellis and Evans, *Hist. of Lancaster Co.*, Pa., p. 954.
12 "Connolly's Narrative," *Pa. Mag. of Hist. and Biog.*, XIII, 63f. Connolly goes on to say that he was on parole "between five and six weeks." Counting backward from Feb. 23rd, the date on which he was ordered to return—see *Pa. Archives, 1st series*, V, 242f.—we reach Jan. 14th or 20th, between which dates the parole must have been granted.
14 Ibid., 1st series, V, 242f.
15 Ibid., 2nd series, I, 707.
16 Ibid., 1st series, V, 245.
18 *Am. Archives, 4th series*, V, 1122. Here the report is dated March 9, 1776, and signed "B. Rush." On page 959, of the same volume, is the same identical report dated Feb. 9, 1776 and signed "W. Rush." It is evident, therefore, that there is some confusion in this document about both the dates and names. In the Rush genealogy—*Pa. Mag. of Hist. and Biog.*, XVII, 333f.—there is a William Rush, who died in 1791, but, if he was a physician, there is no mention of the fact; nor did it state where he lived. On the other hand, Benjamin Rush is listed as the only physician in the family. Hence, the report on p. 959, of the above reference, is judged to be spurious. In regard to the date, 1776, as recorded on p. 1122 of the above reference; on Feby. 8th, 1776, Dr. Rush had recommended that Connolly be allowed to walk in the jail yard—see p. 132 of this narrative—and it is hardly probable that he would recommend further liberty so soon afterwards, especially after having said he could "foresee many dangerous consequences upon his enlargement upon his parole." Moreover, in Mar., 1777, Connolly had but recently returned from his brother's home where he had enjoyed the privilege of riding, and it is not improbable that he persuaded Dr. Rush that such exercise had done him much good. From this the author concludes that the proper date for this document is Mar. 9, 1777 rather than 1776.
21 *Colonial Records*, XI, 196.
23 Ibid., p. 297.
24 See p. 151.
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28 Ibid., p. 64.
29 Journals of the Continental Congress, IX, 800.
31 Journals of the Continental Congress, IX, 1004.
34 Ibid., p. 527.

Those who have served in almost any army can recall similar preparations for a general inspection.

37 Ibid., p. 154.
38 Ibid., pp. 154ff.
39 Journals of the Continental Congress, IX, 848.
40 Colonial Records, XI, 567.
43 Colonial Records, XI, 567.
45 Ibid.
46 Journals of the Continental Congress, XII, 1136.
48 Journals of the Continental Congress, XII, 1136.
49 Ibid., p. 1102.
51 Ibid., p. 162.
52 Journals of the Continental Congress, XII, 1125ff.
54 Journals of the Continental Congress, XII, 1130.
55 See p. 157.
57 Dec. 2, 5, 10, 1778 and April 6, 1779. See Journals of the Continental Congress, XII, 1183, 1188, 1207; XIII, 425.
59 Journals of the Continental Congress, XIV, 514.
60 See pp. 158f.
61 Journals of the Continental Congress, XIV, 514.
63 Ibid., p. 825.
64 Ibid., pp. 825f.
65 Ibid., p. 990.
66 Ibid., XV, 1170.
67 Ibid., XV, 1231.
69 Ibid., p. 166.

These suppositions are based on two reported facts: the one, Diffenderfer, "Col. John Connolly, Loyalist, "Hist. Papers and Addresses of the Lancaster Co. Hist. Soc., VII, 137, says that Connolly's second wife was the widow of Samuel Wellington of Delaware; the other, a query in "Notes and Queries," Pa. Mag of Hist. and Biog., XXVI, 413, which states that Connolly had a son born to him on April 1, 1781, in Philadelphia. From these it is guessed that he married Mrs. Wellington before leaving Germantown on July 4, 1780.

71 Pa. Archives, 1st series, VIII, 104.
72 General Washington had specified this particular Lt.-Col., instead of "any" Lt.-Col. as Congress had seen fit to resolve—

73 *Ibid.* Connolly *may* have conducted other prisoners with himself to New York, for in *Pa. Archives, 2nd series*, I, 640, there is found this undated order:

“To Rob. Jewel, Esq., Keeper of the State Prison:

Sir: you are to send off the following Persons your Prisoners under the Care of John Connolly;” and there follows the names of 29 New Yorkers and 10 Jerseymen.


80 “Notes and Queries,” *Pa. Mag. of Hist. and Biog.*, V, 234. R. G. Thwaites, co-editor of *Documentary History of Dunmore’s War*, p. 42, says, in a footnote, that Connolly escaped to Canada in 1781 and the next year led a force which destroyed Hannastown. This is a mistake, for Connolly did not even go to Canada in 1781.


89 *Colonial Records*, XIII, 161.


CHAPTER IX
Later Life

When Connolly departed for New York it is probable that Mrs. Connolly accompanied him. (1) There they secured permission from Sir Guy Carleton to sail, with the returning fleet, to England. (2) In that country they abode for a few years, Connolly receiving all the while his pay as a Lieutenant-Colonel in the Provincial service. (3)

While there he interested himself in endeavoring to secure reimbursement for the confiscation of his estates by the American patriots and in laying plans for bringing about the restoration of the American colonies to the British Crown. (4) It was probably to stir up sympathy in favor of his claims that he there wrote and published, 1783, *A Narrative of the Transactions, Imprisonment, and Sufferings of John Connolly, an American Loyalist and Lieutenant-Colonel in His Majesty's Service*. (5) In this symposium it is evident that he tries to show how valu-
able his services were—or might have been—to the British, and often calls attention to the fact that he many times risked life and fortune in their cause. (6)

It was, perhaps, due to this plea for public sympathy that he was eventually able to secure a continuance of his services at half-pay. (7) On February 2, 1784, and the following days, he was permitted to lay his claims for compensation before the British Claims Court. In his testimony he stated that he had inherited land in Pennsylvania which he had later sold; and that he had settled in Virginia in 1770, where he had purchased 300 acres of land in Augusta County and 40 acres, with house and furniture, near Pittsburgh. In the list of losses sustained, which he submitted, there are several other items, namely: £1000 for land, house and furnishings near Pittsburgh; £4000 for 4000 acres of land owned in Fincastle County; (8) £500 for other lands in that neighborhood; £307 13s 9d for pay as Major Commandant of Militia from December 16, 1773, to June 16, 1775; and £849 13s for losses of wheat, flour, pack horses, horses, etc. He produced several witnesses to certify to these losses, notably Lord Dunmore. (9) In fact Lord Dunmore had provided him with a public letter on October 25, 1782, in which it was stated, in part:

I further certify that Lieutenant-Colonel Connolly, from his loyalty and attachment to government, forfeited a very considerable sum of money due to him from the Assembly of Virginia, for his public services as an officer; and that his estate was confiscated; four thousand acres of his landed property having been patented by me, whilst I had the honour to preside as his Majesty's representative in Virginia. (10)

However, in spite of this testimony, the commissioners apparently decided that Connolly's losses were grossly exaggerated, for they allowed him only a small portion of what he asked for, namely: £120 for land in Pennsylvania; £48 for the house and 40 acres near Pittsburgh; £150 for his furniture; and £475 for his 4000 acres in Fincastle County—a total of £793. With this sum Connolly evidently had to be satisfied.

There is a rumor that he returned to America sometime before 1787 and lived for a while with his half brother, General James Ewing, near Lancaster. The story goes that, while here, he was not wont to be very tactful in his expressions of contempt for the young republic. These utterances at one time so angered the General that he lost his
temper and, in spite of his affection for his brother, attempted to throttle him. Serious consequences were only prevented by the intervention of Mrs. Ewing. (11) Another tale has it that, when Connolly decided to go to Canada, he "confiscated" a horse belonging to a neighboring farmer and rode away on his journey to the north; but, when he had arrived at his destination, he sent back money to pay for the animal. (12)

In any case it is known that he was in Quebec in the winter of 1787-1788. From there he was sent by Lord Dorchester, then Governor of Canada, to Detroit, in 1788, as a lieutenant-governor, "with Instructions to encourage Emigration into the Province as well as for other purposes." (13) From this post Connolly sent an emissary to Kentucky to ascertain the sentiment in that territory. This man, on his return, reported that the people of Kentucky wanted to separate from the United States and form a separate government of their own. Shortly afterward a General Samuel Holden Parsons, interested in starting a new settlement on the Ohio, made advances to Connolly relative to the possibility of Great Britain keeping open the Mississippi River as an outlet for the products of his settlers. (14) To Connolly this seemed a golden opportunity to avenge himself upon the United States for his treatment during the Revolution. Accordingly, he determined to go to Louisville and further sound the sentiment of the people. To conceal his real motive, he let it be known that he was making the journey in order to obtain testimony as to the actual value of his property that had been confiscated in that city, so that he could better support his claim upon the British Government for compensation. (15)

Inasmuch as this confiscated land offered to Connolly his excuse for coming to Louisville, it may not be out of place to digress for a moment and trace, as briefly as possible, the history of his particular plot. It will be remembered that, while he was in prison in Philadelphia, he had, on February 7, 1776, divided the grant with his partner John Campbell, and had then given a mortgage on his portion to John Campbell and Joseph Simon to secure a debt owed to them. (16) Four years later, January 24, 1780, General George Rogers Clark was asked to persuade those already settled on the land to sign a petition asking the government of Virginia to establish a town on the spot. (17)
This was evidently done, for in May of that year the Virginia Assembly passed the desired legislation, declaring Connolly's portion forfeited, and vesting the authority for plotting the town and selling the lots in a body of nine trustees. However, they were careful to guard John Campbell's section against such seizure, as that gentleman was then a prisoner of the British. (18) As if this act of forfeiture were not enough, a Kentucky jury (of which Daniel Boone was a member), sitting at Lexington on July 1, 1789, also deprived Connolly of his lands because of his Tory sympathies. (19) The trustees appointed by the Virginia Assembly proceeded to do as directed, but a halt was called to their activities, in May, 1783, when John Campbell returned from captivity, and proved: that, though he and Connolly had divided the land, a line of partition had never been surveyed; and that he and Joseph Simon still held the mortgages for four hundred and fifty pounds on Connolly's portion. (20) In October, 1783, the Assembly, therefore, ordered the dividing line to be surveyed. (21) Even yet the trustees were uncertain what to do, for Connolly's forfeited lands were still covered by Campbell's and Simon's mortgage. Additional legislation was consequently passed in the next three years, October, 1784, and October, 1786, empowering the trustees to go ahead with the planning of the town and the selling of the lots; and stating that the mortgage should be met from the proceeds of the sales after all necessary expenses had been deducted. (22) This was evidently done, for no other difficulties seem to have presented themselves.

As was stated above, it was given out in Detroit by Connolly that he intended to visit Kentucky in order to ascertain the true value of these lands which were once his. It is at once clear that this could not have been his actual purpose, for, in addition to his regular half-pay, Lord Dorchester had lately increased this stipend two hundred pounds annually and agreed to meet all expenses incurred in the performance of duty. (23) This would surely not have been done in order to enable Connolly to establish further claims against the British Government.

In any case Connolly set out on his journey in September, 1788. Travelling overland from Detroit to the mouth of the Big Miami River, he came from that point down the Ohio to Louisville, arriving about the first of October. (24)
There he met his old friend and partner, John Campbell, now a resident of that town. To account for his visit, he here professed to have discovered some legal flaw in the proceedings that had stripped him of his lands; and announced that he had come to have those proceedings set aside and his lands restored. (25) The length of time which such litigation would consume gave him a plausible excuse for renting a house and establishing his residence in the village. Having settled himself, he wrote to several of his old friends in and around Pittsburgh and intimated that he might visit them during the winter. (26)

But he had more to occupy his time than the writing of letters to his old friends. In the early days of November the Kentuckians were holding a constitutional convention by way of preparing the way for their entry into the union. He, therefore, made it a point to meet and converse with many prominent men during the course of the election of delegates and during the sitting of the convention. In this manner he was able to sound the sentiment of the people and to secure full information of all that transpired. (27)

While the convention was in session it had been suggested by certain delegates that Kentucky should intrigue with Spain, which nation controlled the mouth of the Mississippi, for the use of that river as a highway for their produce. This suggestion had been opposed by Colonels Thomas Marshall and George Muter, in particular. These were the gentlemen, therefore, whom Connolly approached with his British proposition a few days after the convention had adjourned. (28)

Being unacquainted with the two men, he took along his friend, John Campbell, to perform the introductions. After these necessary formalities, Connolly launched unabashed into his proposal. As Col. Marshall later reported the conversation to President Washington, Connolly stated that, if the Kentuckians wished to assert their rights to the navigation of the Mississippi, Great Britain would furnish them with arms, ammunition, clothing and money, and would aid them with four thousand troops from Canada, besides the two regiments then in Detroit. With this assistance it was believed that the Kentuckians could seize New Orleans, fortify the Balize, and maintain themselves against Spain. Marshall responded by reminding Connolly that these overtures of Lord Dorchester would come with
better grace after he had shown his disapproval of the Indian ravages on the western settlements which had been instigated by the British. Connolly disclaimed all responsibility for these outrages and offered to induce Dorchester to exert the British authority in preventing them. In spite of these generous proposals, he was unsuccessful in persuading Marshall and Muter to aid him in his plans, for Marshall realized—though Connolly did not, apparently, put the condition into words—that the acceptance of such aid would necessitate the transference of Kentucky's allegiance to Great Britain. (29) Considerably crestfallen, no doubt, Connolly decided to take his proposition elsewhere.

He next turned to General James Wilkinson, then in Kentucky, who was much more suitable to work on, for the latter was at the time intriguing with Spain. The story of the visit and its results are told by the General in a letter which he wrote, on February 12, 1789, to the Spanish Governor Miro at New Orleans. He states that his Louisville agent had informed him of Connolly's presence in the city, and of that gentleman's intention to visit him. The letter continues—

Suspecting the nature of the negotiation he had on hand, I determined, in order to discover his secret views, to be beforehand with him, and to invite him here. Consequently he came to my house on the 8th (30) of November. I received him courteously, and, as I manifested favorable dispositions towards the interests of his Britannic Majesty, I soon gained his confidence—so much so—that he informed me that Great Britain, desiring to assist the American settlers in the West, in their efforts to open the navigation of the Mississippi, would join them with ready zeal, to dispossess Spain of Louisiana. He remarked that the forces in Canada were not sufficient to send a detachment of them to us, but that Lord Dorchester would supply us with all the implements of war, and with money, clothing, &c. . . . to equip ten thousand men, if we wished to engage in that enterprise. He added that, as soon as our plan of operation should be agreed upon, these articles should be sent from Detroit, through Lake Erie, to the river Miami, and thence to the Wabash, to be transported to any designated point on the Ohio, and that a fleet of light vessels would be ready at Jamaica to take possession of the Balize, at the same time that we should make an attack from above. He assured me that he was authorized by Lord Dorchester to confer honors and other rewards on the men of influence who should enter on that enterprise, and that all those who were officers in the late continental army, should be provided with the same grade in the service of Gt. Britain. He urged me much to favor his designs, offering me what rank and emoluments I might wish for, and telling me at the same time that he was empowered to grant commissions for the raising of two regiments which he hoped to form in Kentucky. After having pumped out of him all that I wished to know, I began to
weaken his hopes by observing that the feelings of animosity engendered by the late revolution were so recent in the hearts of the Americans, that I considered it impossible to entice them into an alliance with Gt. Britain; that, in this district, particularly in that part of it where the inhabitants had suffered so much from the barbarous hostilities of the Indians, which were attributed to British influence, the resentment of every individual was much more intense and implacable. In order to justify this opinion of mine and induce him to go back, I employed a hunter, who feigned attempting his life. The pretext assumed by the hunter was the avenging of the death of his son, murdered by the Indians at the supposed instigation of the English. As I told the commission of a Civil Judge, it was, of course, to be my duty to protect him against the pretended murderer, whom I caused to be arrested and held in custody.

I availed myself of this circumstance to communicate to Connolly my fear of not being able to answer for the security of his person, and I expressed my doubts whether he would escape with life. It alarmed him so much, that he begged me to give him an escort to conduct him out of our territory, which I readily assented to, and on the 20th of November, he recrossed the Ohio on his way back to Detroit. (31)

For some reason—it may have been to conceal from Miro that he actually was intriguing with Connolly in spite of what he wrote—General Wilkinson gave the date of Connolly’s departure several days, and possibly weeks, before it took place. In one account it is stated that Connolly remained in Lexington three weeks. (32) Also, General St. Clair was writing letters, on November 28th and December 13th, 1788, in which he spoke as if Connolly were still in Kentucky. Moreover, one of St. Clair’s officers intercepted one of Connolly’s messengers to Alexander McKee, the Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs in Canada. This messenger bore the following pass, of which the date and place of issue are particularly significant:

The Bearer hereof is Charged with Business of a friendly nature. You will please therefore to recommend him to the Natives in General that no evil consequences may ensue from the interruption of a good Design.

Given under my hand and seal at Lexington, in the District of Kentucky, this third day of December, 1788.

John Connolly. (34)

But even though he did not depart until after the date Wilkinson had given, it is pretty well established that, when he did go, he went “to escape from the dread of private assassination.” (35)

It was just as well for him, perhaps, that he left when he did, for several patriots were eager to have him apprehended. General St. Clair, in particular, had been waiting for evidence to arrest him. On November 28th, the General
had written to one of his subordinates, Major Wyllys, telling him to “watch that gentleman”, meaning Connolly, and, if necessary, to entice him to the fort and search his luggage. (36) Not content with this precaution, St. Clair tried to secure federal action by informing the State department, in a letter of December 13th, of Connolly’s machinations. (37) Another gentleman, a citizen of Danville, Kentucky, thought the matter serious enough to warrant a letter direct to President Washington. In this he expressed the fears of the patriots in regard to Connolly’s fomentations. (38) And on February 12, 1789, Col. Thomas Marshall rather tardily informed Washington of the nature and substance of Connolly’s visit to himself and Muter. (39) This notice sufficiently alarmed Washington, so he advised the State department to take the necessary precautions. James Madison, then Secretary of State, replied, March 8th, that he had received similar information and that the matter had been transmitted to the Executive of Congress, in order that regular steps might be taken, “if sufficient ground be afforded, for apprehending the incendiary”. (40) But of course Connolly had returned to Detroit long before this belated action was taken.

However, his trip had not been wholly fruitless, for one of those—which, is unknown—to whom he had revealed his design, later wrote to Lord Dorchester a series of “reflections’ in which he described the condition of affairs in Kentucky, and their need for the control of the Mississippi; and suggested that the Lord once more make his proposals since the Atlantic states were now abandoning them. Moreover, Lord Dorchester, as late as the middle of April, 1789, still believed his plans to be feasible, for he knew that there were several prominent men in Kentucky, even then, who would accept with complacency a status as a British protectorate for their territory. (41) But, for all their plotting, the conspiracy eventually came to nothing.

After his return to Detroit, Connolly must have remained there some months. When his grandiloquent dream of the annexation of Kentucky had vanished, he turned his attention to private concerns and, along with other Loyalist refugees from the United States, entered a petition for land east of the Detroit River. A schedule of petitions received by the Land Board for the District of Hesse, Ontario, gives that of Connolly under date of July 2, 1790, and
locates the tract, for which a grant is asked, on Lake Erie in the Fish Creek Division. Alexander McKee was a member of this Land Board and his records show that other Tories, such as Matthew Elliot, George and James Girty, Captain Bird, Captain Caldwell, as well as himself, were locating lands in the same neighborhood with Connolly. (42) Evidently not satisfied with the amount then obtained, Connolly, as a United Empire Loyalist, applied to the Canadian Land Board, in 1796, for another grant.

What his manner of life was, or what his occupation, during these years and up to 1799, we do not know. But sometime in that year, his old friend, Colonel Alexander McKee, long Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, died. Through the influence of the Duke of Kent, then in Canada, Connolly managed to secure the appointment to succeed his deceased friend. On December 16th Sir John Johnson, Superintendent General, informed Lieutenant-Governor Hunter, of the arrival of his new subordinate in these words:

I have the honor to Report to your Excellency, the arrival of Lieut. Colonel Connolly, by whom I am honored with a Letter, from General His Royal Highness the Duke of Kent, ordering me to succeed any Person who may have been placed, ad Interim, by General Prescott, to the situation lately held in the Indian Department, by the late Colonel McKee. (43)

Now it so happened that a Captain William Claus, a relative of Sir John’s and a grandson of Sir William Johnson, had already been ordered to take over the duties of the vacated office. Consequently, Sir John was loath to oust his relative and place Connolly. He, therefore, in his letter to Hunter, questioned Connolly’s ability, and, the better to disclose the latter’s deficiencies, he described the especially qualifications of the former official McKee. Noting that the deceased officer had been brought up among the Indians, he said that the Indians had liked him, “not only for his knowledge of them, their language, &c., but from an uncommon goodness of disposition”, for it was because of his patience with them that the Indians had cheerfully obeyed him. After this eulogy, Sir John continued:

Your Excellency will therefore I presume agree in opinion with me, that it would be highly necessary for the good of the King’s service, that the Person appointed to succeed him, should at least possess some of those essential requisities, which it cannot be presumed Lieut. Colonel Connolly does, and I am sorry, as I think it my duty, to be under the necessity of declaring he does not, though he possesses talents that might render him useful in any other Line of Service.
This letter caused the Lieutenant-Governor to exert himself to bring about Connolly's removal. He, therefore, enlisted the aid of the Duke of York, the Duke of Kent's elder brother. As a consequence Connolly's opponents were successful, for in June, 1800, his appointment was cancelled by the Duke of Kent at the request of the Duke of York.

(45) Of the succeeding years little is known. It is clear that, after losing his position in the Indian department, he moved to Montreal where he passed the remainder of his days. In spite of his many land grants, for some reason or other he now had but little property and subsisted for the most part upon his allowance of half-pay granted to him by the government. During these long days of inactivity, the disappointments and frustrated ambitions of earlier years preyed upon his mind to such an extent that they eventually brought upon him a long and painful illness. His body and powers of resistance, long since weakened by his imprisonment, were too enfeebled to withstand the effects of this malady and he died, January 30, 1813. (46) To mourn his passing there were but his widow, Margaret, and possibly one son. (47)

Thus endeth the Story of the Tory, John Connolly, whose schemes, had they been carried out, might have altered the course of the Revolutionary War and the History of North America.

Footnotes
1 "Notes and Queries," Pa. Mag. of Hist. and Biog., XXVI, 413. Here it is stated that a son, Thomas Connolly, was born to them in London, April 9, 1783.
3 Ibid.
5 See footnote 13, Chapter 1.
6 Pa. Mag. of Hist. and Biog., XII, 315.
7 Burton, op. cit., p. 95, says he did not even secure the half-pay of a retired officer and yet on p. 100, in a footnote, quotes from the Canadian Archives Report, 1890, p. 124, the following record: "A Lieutenant Colonel Conolly, a half pay officer, who has been recently fixed at Detroit, with the appointment of lieutenant governor, has penetrated through the western country, with a view doubtless to mark and try the spirit of the people; he found them nearly divided and therefore in that respect, was protected in his person from any public apprehension, but found it requisite to escape from the dread of private assassination." We prefer to accept the latter authority.
Where Louisville, Ky., now stands.


Ellis and Evans, Hist. of Lancaster Co., Pa., p. 955.


Hening, Laws of Virginia, X, 293ff.

Collins, Hist. of Ky., II, 183; also Durrett, The Centenary of Louisville, pp. 54ff.

Hening, op. cit., XI, 276f., 321f.

Ibid., pp. 321f.

Ibid., p. 475 and XII, 395f.


Gayarre, Hist. of La., III, 235.

Green, The Spanish Conspiracy, p. 299; also The St. Clair Papers, II, 102.

The St. Clair Papers, 11, 102.

Green, op. cit., p. 299.

Ibid., pp. 301ff.

Correspondence of the American Revolution, being Letters of Eminent Men to George Washington, IV, 245ff.

Green, op. cit., p. 300, says that the "8th" is a misprint or slip of the pen for the "18th" because the official report of the November convention shows that on the 8th Wilkinson was in Danville, and not at home in Lexington. In fact he did not leave Danville until late November 10th.

Gayarre, op. cit., III, 235ff.

Quoted from the newspaper, Western World, Oct. 25, 1806, by Green op. cit., in a footnote on p. 300.


Ibid., p. 106.

See footnote 7 of this Chapter.

The St. Clair Papers, II, 98f.

Ibid., p. 101.

Letter, dated Dec. 18, 1788, from a Mr. Innes, in footnote, The Writings of George Washington, IX, 474.

See pp. 178f.


Ibid.

Burton, op. cit., p. 104.

Ibid., p. 105.

Ibid.
No record was obtainable concerning the fate of his first wife's child. In "Notes and Queries," Pa. Mag. of Hist. and Bio., XXVI, 413, there is this query:

"Connolly.—Information is requested of James Connolly, born April 1, 1781, in Philadelphia, and his brother, Thomas Connolly, born April 9, 1783, in London, the sons of Lt. Col. John Connolly, of the British army.

It may have been one of these boys about whom David Zeisberger in his Diary, I, 406, on April 23, 1788, at New Salem, Ohio, wrote: "White people from Detroit, Connolly's son, came here on their way to Pittsburgh. His father is commandant there."

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Note: The works cited here all contain references, some very slight, to Lt.-Col. John Connolly. The list does not in any sense represent the number of authorities consulted. Some of the following have been quoted in footnotes, some not.

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