Henry Laurens to John Laurens, London, December 12, 1774

Charles Town So Carolina 12 Decemr 1774.

[Extract]

p Mr. Pringle in Capt White.

After I had embarked on board *Le Despenser* the 7th Ulto I wrote you as well as circumstances would permit a few Lines in answer to yours of the 3d which reached me on the point of departing from Falmouth, my Letter was sent on Shoar to be put into the Post office by persons who were Strangers to me, the Consideration of which had led me to this particular retrospect.

I had in the general an excellent passage from Falmouth to the Coast of Carolina, fair wind & pleasant mild air we got into sounding 15 fathms the 32d day but happened to fall in Soward of the Bar which converted the fair into an adverse Wind & gave us the trouble of two Days beating up ? In the Evening of the Second an unskilful young Man was put on board our Vessel in Character of a Pilot & he took upon himself the charge of conducting her the next day into this Harbour but an hour before Midnight I felt a violent Shock in Bed which awoke & started me up ? Gracious God Said I, surely the Vessel struck Ground this Instant or I dreamt So, the murmur was Scarcely expressed, when I heard the Captain's Voice, Oh, I Shall loose my Ship, My Dear Mr Laurens I Shall loose my Ship! ? Ah Sir Ah Captain I answered I am Sorry for your loss but compose your Self & be Steady recover your Spirits & let us think of means for Saving Lives ? then I hastned upon Deck where the Wind blew Strong, it was freezing piercing Cold & a rough Sea but less so than it would have been had not the Wind blown from the Land Side ? uncomfortable weather for Swimming or attempting the escape of twenty one persons in two Small inconvenient Boats, Breakers to be encountered, ten or twelve Miles from Shoar & Seven long hours of Night before us, perceiving the Commander continued wailing & discomposed I addressed by old acquaintance the Master Talbot & his Brother the Mate both active Seamen admonished them to be Steady not alarmed ? the pilot I comforted dont be frighted pilot by the accident ? recollect your Self, think where we are & for means of getting us off again if possible ? I ran below & brought up two Lanthorns with Lighted Candles & prevailed on the Boatswain to hoist them on the Ensign Staff to Shew our distress to Vessels which were following us in order to claim their Aid as well as to caution one in particular which was very near & coming hastily into the Same danger, this Step had the good effect of turning that Vessel instantly back again, in the mean time Master Talbot his Brother & the sober young fellows under them were acting their parts with judgement & boldness ? do this ? do that Said Talbot & he was obeyed, the Ship Struck about eleven times, the Scene was awful, a high Wind, excessively Cold thumping admist Breakers on a Bank in the open Ocean in the forepart of a long Night, Boats not good ? I then thought of a phrase in one of your last Letters, "Stageless Voyage" So descriptive of Eternity. I considered or rather the thought was introduced in my mind that I was born to Die & I did not find my Self miserable in the seeming extremity, I was a helpless hand & could do nothing more than to repeat & press my advice to those who were Skilful & could work, to be steady & undaunted which I perceived had a good effect; the people were animated active and Calm, every proper means was used & it was fortunately from a flowing Tide, the Ship was got off & into deep Water again ? we narrowly & amazingly escaped ? I felt a humble thankful heart & retired to my Bed again . . . next Morning that is to Say yesterday we took in another Pilot who brought our Vessel to anchor about Noon not far from opposite to Mr Rose's Wharf where I landed & preceeded immediately to this House . . .

I have only learned Since my arrival what I Suppose you have known for a Month past I mean of our American public affairs, that the Inhabitants of 12 United Links of this Chain of Colonies from New Hampshire to South Carolina have unanimously determined to make a firm & Steady opposition to the Measures adopted by Administration for enslaving us & our posterity ? there is a Spirit here which Surpasses all expectation its

continuance will depend upon the Wisdom & policy of those Resolutions & associations by which we are at present bound ? these I have not yet Seen, no doubt you have as they are before this day made public in all parts of Great Britain, fathom them & give me your opinion ? dont take either Side & form a partial opinion ? but reflect well before you write, I write this hint because I know you are an American Zealot & may be in good time an Enthusiast ? I am both where I see the way clear before me. ? therefore I am so in the grandpoints of our controversy. ? I look forward now & perceive more fully those impending distresses which I have often pointed out to you, as the certain consequences of tenacity on both parts, but many people here I fear are not aware of them ? I am not afraid of encountering even poverty ? if we are all of the Same opinion we Shall in ? time Surmount every difficulty ? but where am I running to ? the Vessel is to Sail toMorrow Morning ? I must conclude . . .

1. Henry Laurens Letter Book, 1774-1775, SCHS.

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