

PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

OF GREENWICH, NEW JERSEY

CHAPLAIN IN THE REVOLUTION

1776

LETTERS TO HIS WIFE

ELIZABETH BEATTY FITHIAN

WITH A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

BY FRANK D. ANDREWS



VINELAND, NEW JERSEY

1932

F. S. O. O.

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FOREWORD

A man's life may be rich in experience, though he live but a few years. Such was the life of Philip Vickers Fithian whose earthly career was covered by less than twenty-nine eventful years.

Brought up in a religious atmosphere under the care and influence of a sainted mother, receiving early instruction and his higher education from Presbyterian divines, graduating from a Presbyterian college, his studies brought out and intensified his higher nature.

A year among the refined and cultured Church of England families of Virginia whose wealth and position enabled them to live at ease and enjoy the pleasures of society, may have broadened his mind and enlightened his understanding, but did not materially change the purpose of his life.

His devotion to the sacred calling for which his studies had prepared him, carried him through the wilderness on his missionary tours to preach the gospel to his fellowmen far removed from church and religious environment.

His love of country and the cause of liberty took him from wife and home to serve, to help and to influence his brother patriots.

His removal in early manhood amid the activities of war was as much a sacrifice to the cause of Independence as that of the soldiers who fell in battle.

From a perusal of his letters to his wife, fortunately preserved from destruction, long in my possession, there arose a desire to learn more of his life history. "Philip Vickers Fithian's Journal and Letters" published by the Princeton Historical Association in 1900 has been of much assistance and use in writing the following sketch, and my indebtedness is herewith gratefully acknowledged.

Living within a score of miles of the old home of Mr. Fithian, it has been my pleasure to visit the places with which he was once familiar and follow, as it were, his footsteps in his native, and adjoining, States.

Leaving his home at Greenwich (still standing) we proceed to the site of the church he attended, marked by the grave of Rev. Andrew Hunter who was buried in the center aisle. If

we walk among the graves in the well-kept yard, the names of many of Philip's friends and associates will be found upon the tombstones. There too, is the grave of his beloved wife, Elizabeth who, some years after his death, married his cousin Joel Fithian.

A few miles distant stood the parsonage of the Deerfield Church where, under Rev. Enoch Green, Philip pursued his studies for the ministry. The old parsonage where he spent some of his happiest days is gone, but the brook crossing the road where the lovers walked, softly murmurs as of yore as it flows to join the flood which bears the argosies of the modern world.

The old church at Deerfield has been enlarged since Philip's day. Here too, within this sacred enclosure were buried his friends, among them Michael Hoshell, the driver of the stage which carried Philip to Cooper's Ferry on his way to Philadelphia, often stopping at Pole Tavern for refreshments. In Philip's time travel between that city and New York required two days,—now, two hours suffice.

Let us stop at Princeton and visit Nassau Hall, the pride of the College of New Jersey. Here Philip studied and was graduated and from this place went out to make his mark in the world.

At Neshaminy the early home of Elizabeth, we cannot linger though Philip visited her here.

The New York that he saw in 1776 bears no resemblance to the present metropolis with its modern lofty buildings.

We follow him to Brooklyn, where he saw the British Army in battle array, and then back to the ferry in that masterly retreat which saved Washington's army.

We find Philip at Mount Washington and near Kingsbridge with Col. Newcomb's battalion when New York was occupied by the enemy. Later, encamped on Mount Washington, stricken by disease, death claimed all that was mortal of Philip Vickers Fithian.

Our quest has brought us to this historic place, once the scene of blood and carnage, now revealed in all its quiet beauty. We can follow his footsteps no further, nor can we penetrate the veil which hides his future.

FRANK D. ANDREWS

VINELAND, NEW JERSEY
JULY, 1932

PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Greenwich, in West New Jersey, was the largest and most prosperous town in Cohansie, as that part of Cumberland County was called before the Revolution. It was settled by the Quakers who came with John Fenwick to Salem in 1675. A few years later emigrants who had located in New England and Long Island removed to this locality. They were of the Baptist and Presbyterian faith, the latter uniting with the Quakers in building up the town of Greenwich. A thoroughly religious people, who worshipped God each in his own way and lived in harmony with his neighbor.

Into this peaceful community Philip Vickers Fithian was born December 29, 1747. His ancestry has been traced from William, the emigrant, and his wife Margaret, early settlers of East Hampton, Long Island in 1640, through Samuel, their son, and Priscilla Burnett whom he married, to Josiah, their son, who with his parents came to Fairfield, a New England settlement not far from Greenwich about 1698. Josiah removed to the latter place where he married, November 7, 1706, Sarah, daughter of Philip Dennis, a minister of the Society of Friends. Their children were: John, Jeremiah, Samuel, Hannah, Esther, Joseph and Josiah. Joseph, the fourth son, married Hannah Vickers, July 29, 1746. The following year their son Philip, the subject of this sketch, was born, (December 29, 1747.)

Philip's boyhood was, no doubt, similar to that of the sons of the neighboring farmers with whom he associated. He differed, however, in his extreme sensitiveness to reproof or correction, which left him sullen or low-spirited. In school he was eager to learn and although considered a serious boy, he was not devoid of humor; the spirit of mischief sometimes led him to violate the rules. Once he relates putting snuff into the open mouth of a fellow pupil, who had fallen asleep on his bench, with startling results for which he was soundly flogged, as he richly deserved.

Like boys of that period, he was brought up to work on the farm. He did not, however, propose to become a farmer but was desirous of obtaining an education that would fit him for a

PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

profession. With that end in view, he asked and received the support of his father who placed him under the care of Rev. Andrew Hunter, the Presbyterian minister at Greenwich, for instruction. Mr. Hunter, having no children of his own, adopted the son of his brother, a British officer, then residing in Virginia; the boy bore the same name as his uncle, Andrew, and when Philip became an inmate of the minister's family, the boys became close friends.

In the neighboring town of Deerfield, lived Rev. Enoch Green, who was installed pastor of the church there, in 1766. It was the custom of that time for ministers to receive pupils into their homes to study the higher branches of learning. To Philip, who was anxious to learn, this was an opportunity not to be lost. He persuaded his father to put him in Mr. Green's school that he might finish his education, even if in so doing the whole of his patrimony was expended.

Philip had already commenced keeping a diary; in it he records on August 17, 1767 this entry: "Entered school to the Rev. Enoch Green at Deerfield to learn Latin."

The parsonage was but a few miles from his home in Greenwich and he could still help his father on the farm during the busy season. It was while Philip was pursuing his studies that Mr. Green married, June 7, 1770, Mary, daughter of Rev. Charles Beatty of Neshaminy, Penn., and brought his bride home to Deerfield.

To make her sister an extended visit came Elizabeth Beatty a lovely girl of eighteen years, whose beauty and charming manner deeply impressed Philip. In November 1770, he and his friend Andrew Hunter, Jr., entered the Junior class at Nassau Hall, as the college of New Jersey at Princeton was generally called. At that time there were in attendance a number of students who later became eminent in the affairs of the state and nation, among them James Madison, and Aaron Burr, who arose to the office of president and vice-president of the United States; Henry Lee, of Virginia; Aaron Ogden, of New Jersey; Henry R. Livingston and Morgan Lewis of New York, statesmen; Philip Freneau and Hugh H. Brackenridge, later poet and author. Although brought in contact with these men, his fellow students, Philip does not appear to have become intimate with them.

In February, 1772, his studies were interrupted by a letter from Rev. Andrew Hunter informing him of the death of his parents. His mother, whose deep religious nature he had in-

PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

herited, died the second of the month, and his father, whose indulgence and financial aid had enabled him to attend college, the eighth.

This was a sad and unexpected blow to Philip who loved and respected his parents, especially his mother, whose solicitude for his welfare and whose prayers, that he might withstand temptation and grow in Christian grace and knowledge, were most sincere and helpful in their influence. It became his duty to settle his father's estate as speedily as possible that he might return to his studies, and the personal property was offered for sale by vendue.*

While in college, as at Deerfield, Philip had the opportunity to pay his addresses to Miss Beatty, whom he sometimes called "Laura." While she was at Newington, he would ride over and spend an agreeable afternoon in her company, or on the occasions when she was an inmate of the family circle of her brother Dr. John Beatty of Princeton, Philip again sought her companionship.

He and his friend, Andrew Hunter, Jr., graduated at the annual commencement of the College of New Jersey in September, 1772 and Philip returned to Greenwich to take up the study of divinity under Rev. Andrew Hunter and later, Hebrew, with Rev. Enoch Green at Deerfield. While at the latter place he received a letter from Andrew, who had returned to Princeton as tutor in the college, informing him that one of the first gentlemen of Virginia had written Dr. Witherspoon, the president, for a teacher for his children, "offering as good as £60, the best accommodations, a room to study in, the advantage of a library, a horse kept, and a servant to wait on you." His friend advised him to write the Doctor and engage the place. Philip did so and obtained the situation.

Taking leave of relatives and friends at Greenwich, October 20, 1773, he journeyed on horseback to Nomini Hall, the seat of Honorable Robert Carter in Westmoreland County, Virginia, a distance of two-hundred and sixty miles, which he covered in seven days.

* It is interesting to know that among the things sold was a Bible printed in Dublin in 1752. Evidently it had been purchased with the intention of entering the Fithian family record, which death had prevented. At the sale it was purchased by Dr. Samuel Ward, a practicing physician of Greenwich, for 28 shillings; Dr. Ward died February 17, 1774 and after a year of mourning his widow, Phebe, daughter of Jonathan and Ann Holmes, married February 27, 1775, as his second wife, Dr. Moses Bloomfield of Woodbridge, N. J. In this Bible Dr. Bloomfield wrote his own family record; his son Joseph, born October 13, 1753 was governor of New Jersey. This old Bible has been preserved and the writer has recently been permitted to copy the records for publication in the Vineland Historical Magazine.

PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

The "Hall," one of the stately Virginia mansions, was built by Robert Carter, the father, a short time before his death in 1732.*

Robert Carter Jr., was the only son and inherited the vast estate of his father. He and his wife, Frances Ann Tasker, were of the highest rank in the social life of the colony; educated, cultured and refined, their wealth gave them additional position and standing.

The school room was a separate building not far distant from "the great house"; here Philip lodged, taking his meals with the family in their residence. On Monday, November 1st, Philip opened his school with eight scholars,—Mr. Carter's five daughters, his two sons and a nephew.

During his residence in Virginia, Philip kept a journal† in which he recorded from day to day, not only his personal reflections, but the description, in more or less detail, of the social life and customs of the first families of Virginia among whom Robert Carter moved. Philip was invited, and frequently accompanied the Carters to dinner parties, dances, balls, games and other entertainments given by the neighboring gentry who were influenced by, and endeavored to follow, the fashionable life of London. As Philip neither danced nor played games, he was more of a spectator than a participant in these social func-

* The reader may be interested in learning the remedies used in Robert Carter's last sickness, two centuries ago. Copied from the original bill in my possession.—F. D. A.

THE HONORABLE ROBT. CARTER ESQR., DECEASED,
DR. to GEO. GILMER & CO.

1735			
May 5th	Embrocation	1	6
July 29th	A bottle of milk water	1	6
	Diascorder with Diacoder	1	
	Venice treacle		6
	Specific Tincture	3	
	Red Saunders		6
	Yellow Do.		6
	2 drams, Pouder of Rhubarb	2	1
	3 ozs. Do., Ipecacoann	1	
August 1st	Quajac Wood		8
	China Root		8
	Sarsaparill	1	
	Eringo Root		8
	Shavings of harts horn	1	3
	3 ozs. Matthew's pill	1	
	Dragons blood		6
	2 drams, Oil of Cinnamon	16	
	Orange peel		4
	Pouder Gum Arabic		4
	Isinglass		4
			1£ 14s 3d
	Mr. Prentis,		
	Pray pay the above Acct. for Your humble		
	Servant,		
June 15th, 1733			John Carter.
	June 19th, 1733 Rec'd the within acct. for Self &		Geo. Gilmer.
	Co.		

† The interested reader will find "Philip Vickers Fithian, Journal and Letters, 1765-1774," published by the Princeton Historical Association in 1900, most entertaining.

PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

tions; he, however, viewed them with a critical eye and wrote in his journal entertainingly and frankly of the ladies and gentlemen he met, more particularly of the young ladies, describing their looks, dresses, characteristics and manners, and although it was suggested that from among this bevy of beauty and wealth (to great fortunes) he might choose and settle in the colony, his heart remained true to his beloved Elizabeth Beatty.

After nearly six months of school, Philip obtained leave of absence and returned to New Jersey. On the Sunday following his arrival, he attended the Greenwich Church, where he notes the "Minister and people show some respect and reverence for the Sabbath"; while in Virginia "There is very little thought of its sacredness."

Philip did not long delay in visiting the parsonage where the idol of his heart was staying with her sister, the minister's wife. In her presence he was happy and with her encouragement looked forward to their future union.

For many years Philip had had one purpose in mind,—that of entering the ministry,—his studies under Reverends Hunter and Green were to that end. While in Virginia he had written a thesis and sermon in preparation for his examination before the Presbytery in Philadelphia. He visited that city, was examined and accepted, before returning to Nomini Hall.

While in his native town he noted on May 4th a heavy fall of snow and on the 5th, ice two inches thick, a most unusual occurrence.

Determined to enter upon his ministerial career following his engagement with Mr. Carter, he obtained the consent of John Peck to succeed him in the fall and returned to his charge, reopening his school May 30th. The summer period was a most trying one; the extreme heat left Philip languid and debilitated and his pupils uneasy in their confinement. The cooler weather of fall brought relief and the coming of Mr. Peck, who graduated from the College of New Jersey in September, enabled Philip to return to his home, with a broader view of life and greater toleration for human weakness through his contact with the wealthy, pleasure-loving Virginians whose manners and customs differed so materially from his serious minded and practical friends in Cohansie.

The ominous clouds that threatened the peace of the Colonies, had already overshadowed the country and its inhabitants were taking sides in the controversy which prevailed. Many of

PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

Philip's friends were loyal to the King; many of the young men, who were his companions, were out-spoken advocates of freedom from British oppression. The patriotic zeal of the latter was manifest when on December 12-14, the brig Greyhound, Captain Allen, sailed up the Cohansie river with a cargo of tea,—landed and stored it in Greenwich. Disguised as Indians, some thirty or forty young men of the county broke open the storehouse, and burned the obnoxious tea in Market Square.

Philip and his friend, Andrew Hunter Jr., were in Greenwich at that time and are supposed to have been present. Tradition points to Philip's house as the gathering place for a part of the tea burners.

Posterity is indebted to Philip's journal for the record of that event. Under date of December 23rd he writes: "Last night, the Tea, was by a number of persons in disguise, taken out of the house & consumed by fire. Violent and different are the words about this manoeuvre among the inhabitants. Some rave, some curse and condemn, some try to reason, many are glad the Tea is destroyed, but almost all disapprove the manner of its destruction."

Having been licensed to preach, by the Presbytery December 6, 1774, Philip was anxious to set about his Father's business, and in the true missionary spirit he rode through the wilderness to the Atlantic where, in scattered hamlets along the coast, in primitive churches or settlers houses he preached the gospel to the fishermen and farmers and their families thirsting for the spiritual truths their isolation prevented them from hearing.

As a missionary Philip was appointed by the Presbytery of Donegal, Pennsylvania, to visit the settlements and towns in the district. The appointment was for three months from June 1775, and in houses, barns and under trees in broad meadows, he preached of the love of Jesus, his sacrifice and the means of salvation.

Philip was a lover of the picturesque and the scenery along the Juniata river made a strong appeal to that love. In a prophetic vision he saw what the development of years would mean to that favored locality when towns and cities along its banks would be the homes of teeming multitudes. In his Journal he writes: "I seem to be transfered forward only one century, Great God! America will surprise the World."

PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

Having fulfilled the engagement with the Donegal Presbytery, Philip returned to New Jersey to prepare for his approaching marriage to the woman who had so long held his love and affections.

Miss Beatty, at that time, was in the home of her brother, Dr. John Beatty at Princeton. Philip found her there and on October 25, 1775, they were united in marriage. Rev. John Witherspoon, president of the College of New Jersey, performed the ceremony. For years Philip had looked forward to this happy moment when he could call Elizabeth his bride. In the meantime he had obtained his education, spent a year in Virginia teaching, and had been licensed to preach and carry the glad tidings of a redeeming Savior to famishing souls. Now, at last, his hopes realized, he could look forward to a settlement, a happy home with the being he loved, and years of usefulness.

Soon after his marriage Philip went on a missionary tour into Virginia; filled with the tenderest love for his wife and deploring their separation, he proposed that every evening at eight o'clock they mutually implore the Almighty Creator that both be preserved and be permitted to meet again. This communion of souls with their Maker doubtless helped and sustained Philip in the days that followed. He went to preach the peace of the gospel and save sinners from the wrath of God; he found men had involved the inhabitants of the colony in a turmoil of political strife and uncertainty. With the people in such a state there was little hope the message he was bringing them would be accepted and bear fruit. He was advised not to proceed farther in the colony, and returned to New Jersey.

As the Colonies became more and more involved in war, there were calls for additional soldiers. Philip, ready to make any sacrifice for the good of his country, felt it his duty to enter the service; therefore, with his friend and college classmate, Andrew Hunter, he applied for and obtained an appointment as chaplain, June 20, 1776, being assigned to Col. Silas Newcomb's battalion. Andrew Hunter also applied and was given a position in Col. Van Cortland's battalion, both battalions forming part of Gen. Heard's brigade. The term of service was until December 1st.

In agony of spirit and with a last fond farewell, Philip left the peace and quiet of the country for New York, then the seat of war. Arriving in Philadelphia that city was found alive with the movement of soldiers in arms. In company with Col.

PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

Holme they set out the morning of the 11th of July on the long stage coach ride across New Jersey. While yet some miles away, they heard the cannonading of the batteries as the two British Ships, the *Rose* and the *Phoenix*, successfully passed the forts on their way up the Hudson River.

From his arrival in New York Philip's letters to his wife, which follow this sketch, give an account of his movements and the conditions of affairs in the beleaguered city.

For some weeks the change of environment and manner of living does not appear to have affected his health; his letters are hopeful, informing and full of patriotic fervor and of contempt for King George, his soldiers and sympathizers. Life in camp with its unwholesome surroundings and the changing season, caused much sickness in Col. Newcomb's battalion. During September nearly one third of his men were unfit for duty. Weakened by exposure and fatigue, and perhaps by anxiety of mind, Philip became a victim to the prevailing disorder,—camp fever. Although he had medical aid from his townsman, Dr. Ewing, and the care and attention of his devoted friend, Andrew Hunter, it proved of no avail and death closed the earthly career of Philip Vickers Fithian, October 8th, 1776. On the following day his friend, Chaplain William Hollingshead of Fairfield, conducted the funeral services over his remains which lie in an unknown grave not far from the place of his death on Mount Washington.

LETTERS OF PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

Although it may be said these letters are of a too intimate and personal nature for publication, it is believed, however, not only for their historical importance and value, but for the love and devotion they express and the faith and trust in God and His mercies, which finds a response in the human heart, they should be preserved.

Philada: Feby., 15-72

Miss Bettsy,

Tho i am deprived of the pleasure of conversing with you face to face yet it is a great pleasure to communicate to you by letter. I promised my self two or three days more of your agreeable company but was deprived of it. I took leave of you the afternoon I was at your house with full expectation of seeing you next morning if well but when I got to Mr. D: nancy was ready to set of I persuaded her to stay till evening the time you ware to Return from Mrs. Scotts we came about Seven but you ware not returned & waited about three quarters of an hour which I realy thought three hours expecting you every muinet the even being cleare we concluded you would not Return till Late & nancy was Impatient. I Left the place with Reluctance where I had spent so many agreeable hours I arrived Safe at home about two in the morning after a Journey which had nothing Disagreeable in it but the Reflection that every moment Carried me still farther from you. As this is the first step towards a Correspondence I should be fond of Establishing I let you Know What I Look for & Rejoice in the Expectation of hearing from you soon but I am called away in haste & must bid you adieu.

Philander.

To

Miss Betsy Beatty

in

Neshameny.

* It was the custom among young people of a sentimental turn of mind to use a nom de plume in this correspondence.

Philip occasionally addressed Miss Beatty as "Laura."

LETTERS OF PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

Greenwich. Novem: 9th: 1775.

Madam.

The very bad Weather keeps me unwilling one Night more on this side the Delaware. I am at Home. I mean I am at my Unkle's; for when I speak what my Heart dicates I have no Home on Earth but with you. Tomorrow Morning I must surely away. Farewell, Cohansie:—Farewell my near & agreeable Friends.—Farewell my kind & benevolent Relations—Farewell also my dear dear Betsy, O farewell—! Constantly, with great fervour, I pray for your Welfare to the great Lord who is kind to all his poor forsaken Creatures—Such are you & I—made happy for a moment—Made wretched, by Separation, for Months—! In due Time we shall meet again—If not here, yet very soon in a heavenly transporting Paradise—! At eight o'Clock every Evening, my dear girl, shall I ask you to retire with me, I will always do it, & we will mutually implore our Almighty Creator, that we may both be preserved & in rapturous Pleasure meet again? Read this Letter often. It will remind you of your unchangeable Friend.

P. V. Fithian.

Mrs. Betsy Fithian

Deerfield

Monday 1 O Clock, Nov: 13: 1775

Madam:

I met with Mr. Hunter in this Town— We are to cross the River this Evening—By Ensign Niggle I have an Oppertunity of sending you a Line. I send it with Pleasure, with Gladness.

I have only a Moment be mindful of me: & love—unalterable Constancy of

Your steady & strong

Admirer

Philip V. Fithian

Salem

To Mrs. Betsey Fithian

LETTERS OF PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

Winchester, Vir. (Nov. 19 or 20,) 1775

Madam.

You will not be unwilling to hear by the first sure Conveyance how your absent Pilgrim is spending his Winter Hours—Not without some Uneasiness for the dear girl he has left behind, this I will first & with earnestness assure you.

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Fryday, & Saturday til after Night we were on the Road: Ourselves, however & Horses, are in sound Health & ready to proceed on our Journey further down this Colony.

You must have Care of your Person & Health til I see you again; When that happy Day will be I cannot now tell. It shall not, by Gods Permission be later than I can do my necessary Duty here.

You may write to me easily by the Way I mentioned; you will give my Duty to Mr. & Mrs. Green & Family—

Without any formality & with great Inaccuracy, I send you these two or three Lines, that you may know you are more than ever the Esteem, in every Tye, of

Your humbe Servt:

Philip V. Fithian

Betsey Fithian

Cohansey, New Jersey.

Stephensburgh, Virg. Decem: 2d: 1775

Madam.

I have spent the few Days I have been in Virginia with the highest Satisfaction. I lodge at Capt. Holmes in this Town, a Gentleman of Fortune & Merit. Last Week I was much unwell; the Effect I believe of our very cold Ride: I am now fully recovered, & by God's Mercy, enjoy my usual Health.

This Colony in every Part is in a most pitiable State. Dunmore has issued a diabolical Proclamation declaring Freedom to all Denominations of Servants & Slaves who are able to bear Arms & will repair to his Majesty's royal Standard!

Yesterday printed Orders arrived here by Express from the commanding Officer (Col. Patrick Henry) at Williamsburgh to the recruiting Officers for this Batallion to fill up their Companies forthwith; and if the public are backward men must be

LETTERS OF PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

impressed out of the Militia! At the time of this general & unnatural License given to Servants & Slaves the publick safety is greatly interrupted. The Induction of the Martial Law also with many increases Alarm. I have been advised to omit traveling further. I am now undetermined. This much I am certain of seeing Virginia is involved in such accumulated Distress, if I was now at Home I should most surely think it my Duty to continue there til Spring.

I join however, dreadful as the Aspect is, in the common Calamity; & will exert myself in every Plan which is Generally adopted, even to my personal Service.

My dear Betsey, be not unduely afraid—Seriousness indeed becomes every American now: But painful Fear would be too strong a Resemblance of mean Submission. God is our Almighty Creator. I believe firmly he will kindly be our Preserver. For the litteral Truth of this; & for the particular Security & Happiness of the Woman I most heartily esteem is the steady Prayer, my dearest Girl, of your faithful Friend.

Philip V. Fithian.

To

Mrs. Betsey Fithian

Cohansie

New Jersey

Philada: May 21, 1776.

My dear Betsey.

I hope you are better than when I left you. All my kindest Wishes are for your Health & present & future Happiness. This Day I called at Mr. Harbeson's; your brother George is there. I saw him. But he could not tell me whether he stays in Town.

I called on Capt. Beatty at the Barracks. He is in Health. Is cheerful in the midst of Tumult. He is uncertain of his future Destination, but expects to be appointed to Virginia. Polly is in good Health.

Your brother Charles is at New York, if not on his March to Canada. I breakfasted this Day at Mrs. Websters. Miss Webster & her Father are gone. Miss Althe & Brother, give you their high respects.

LETTERS OF PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

I shall send by the Stage your printed Cotton. It is tolerably well done. But inferior, I think, to Mrs. Green's Pattern for Curtains, which have been some time finished.

Your Cotton I cannot buy under 4/6 in the Seeds, which I think too much.

I do not now recollect any Thing necessary for you to be informed of; I hope to see you this Week.

With my Duty to Mr. and Mrs. Green

I am, my dear Girl

Fondly yours,

Philip V. Fithian

Mrs. Betsey Fithian
Deerfield

For Stage: left at Mr. Freeses.

Philada: July 10th, 1776.

My dear Betsey.

I think we both suffered yesterday with the heat, perhaps equally, but I hope you are at Home & in Peace. Be as satisfied & happy every Day as you can, & that will most of all be pleasing to me.

I called this morning at Mr. Williams & your Shoes are to be sent by next Stage.

Tomorrow morning Col. Holmes & I set off in the Stage for New York. We hope to be there, or near it, on fryday Evening.

Several Companies go out of Town this Day for New Jersey, in which are many of our Friends among others John McAulay & James McCullough march to Day.

Mr. Duffield of this City is leaving his Congregation & going Chaplain to two Battalions from hence!

I cannot form to you the Picture which this Day shows: Suffice it to say, all are in Arms.

Don't expose yourself to much, & yet exercise yourself abroad every week. Be cautious of the Evening Damps: & re-

LETTERS OF PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

member that you have in me, my dear, Dear Betsey, a Friend who always consults your chief Happiness in all he says or does for you.

Farewell, may the God of Mercy bless you- My dear Betsey, Farewell.

Philip V. Fithian

Mrs. Betsey Fithian

Cohansie

New York—July 19th, 1776.

My dear Betsey.

You will expect that I make use of the first, & of all Opportunities to inform you of my State: I do it most gladly. Always when I do any thing for you, it engages all my Heart. That free & unlimited Friendship which I have for you, & which you have approved and returned, dwells steadily in my Thought. Therefore I live for you, & thankful to heaven for the Indulgence of your Society, I own you always to be my dearest & most entertaining companion.

I arrived in this City last Fryday Evening, as I wrote you, an hour & a half after the Cannonade; you will immediately guess at, but cannot easily comprehend, the Situation of Matters after so unexpected an Event. Two Ships & two Tenders are however gone up the North River & lie above us, to obstruct the Market as much as Possible. They lie in what is called Tanpons Bay, a broad part of the River where they are secure. The remainder of the Fleet lie within the Narrows in plan view from the City only eight Miles Distance, near the Staten Island Shore, of which they have full Possession.

There is a vast Army in this City & its Neighborhood; up the East & North Rivers & on the Jersey Shore they are spread from Powles-Hook quite to South Amboy; on Long Island where I expect to go in a few Days; on Governor's Island & on Bedlows, But the Number of the Army I cannot ascertain. Every possible Preparation is making & it is now certainly expected there will be an Action, but that will be a day of dreadful Name.

The Inhabitants of the City who are unfit for military Duty, the Aged, the Women & Children, have chiefly left the Town;

LETTERS OF PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

& Guards are now at all Places of passing, that no Boat or Person can leave or enter the City without an authentic Pass.

Yesterday at the City Hall Independency was proclaimed amidst the Acclamations of Numbers, after which the King's Arms were thrown down to the Multitude, & by them devoured with the greatest rage!

Your Brother John is yet at King's Bridge; I have heard from him several Times that he is in health; last Week he was in town. I supped with Reading last Night; this morning he also is gone to King's Bridge to join his Battalion; lately he has been appointed Ensign to the 5th Battalion of Pennsylvania Troops: he showed me a Letter from Charles dated June the 13th at the mouth of the Sorel: he was in the Action when General Thompson was taken, but escaped & was well when he wrote. This Day I saw & Spoke with Arkee: he came yesterday from Long Island & is now stationed in this Town; he belongs to our Brigade; of Col. V. Cortlands Battalion in Capt Morrells Company. He is hearty but complains like me of sore Bones. You see, my dear Girl, that all your Brothers who are capable of Duty, are engaged in the American Cause.

We are quartered in a good House; but it is totally empty. At night we spread our Blanket & lie on the Floor; I sleep with Mr. Holmes; he has two Blankets and a Pillow; these we spread down & cover us with one; but the hard Floor & rough Blankets, believe me, they are not pleasant.

We have Beef & Bread at Dinner & usually the same for Breakfast & Supper; if we have it not always it is when we buy a little Coffee & cook it up ourselves in our Dinner Pot. But all is good. I boast of the Fare when connected with the Duty. It is American Liberty we are trying to support, & there are many thousands in this Town, as well as me, who are resolved to suffer more before we give it up.

Nothing gives me an anxious Hour but you my kindest Friend. If I had a Security for your safety & Happiness I should be contented. I have told you that nothing but direful War should detain me long from you. And surely unnumbered Curses await that Wretch who has occasioned the Division of such near Alliances. But we shall meet again—in the World to come, if not in this. Be not then unduely troubled; If I fall in Battle, or otherwise; This I ask, let my Memory be dear to you, think of me as a Person, who never viewed you without Emotion; & was never in your Company a Moment but with the highest Pleasure!

LETTERS OF PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

If it is equally convenient you will stay where you are, but your own choice is to be consulted; Be careful of our affairs. Remember my Charge of keeping your little Book. Give my love & Duty to Unkle, the Family, Sister, Brother; Mrs. Hunter; And as many of my Acquaintances as you have Oppertunity.

I lent Squire Ewing the Life of Chesterfield, you will send for it soon & put it up safely, & be careful of my Books.

I have nothing more now, only my strong Request that you write by all oppertunities, be not backward, nor indolent, but often send a Line to your most obliged Friend.

Philip V. Fithian.

To

Mrs. Betsey Fithian

Cohansie

Per Dr. Elmer.

New York, July 22.

My dear Betsy.

I hope the God of Goodness will preserve you in these troublesome Days from Injury & in his Fear: I must always tell you that I have no other earthly Object so dear as you: Every other Creature I can leave with Moderation but my Soul is interwoven Strangely with yours, & I cannot, nor do I wish to divide them: So many Occurances are here I cannot be particular.

Be so kind to me, my lovely Girl, as to take care of yourself, that if I may be returned, I shall find you the kind Woman you have always been to me.

Take Care of my & your Affairs; & be kind to our Acquaintances & always remember in your Prayers & best Wishes your Companion & Friend.

Philip V. Fithian.

To

Mrs. Betsey Fithian

Cohansie.

LETTERS OF PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

Camp, On Long Island: July 29th, 1776.

My dear Betsey.

In this Letter, as I am sure of its going safe, I shall set you a Pattern of what I wish from you by every safe Oppertunity: I mean a long kind Letter, such as two Friends, as you & I are, owe to one another. I received a Line from you by Mr. Hunter, yesterday, the 28th dated the 14th—A long Passage it had, my dear Girl; too long: I wish to hear from you every Moment. You told me that no Accident befel you in returning after we parted; this was good Intelligence, for I was in some Pain several Days on your Account—You tell me Uncle has bad Turns often; this is News unwelcome. I fear they will stay by him. But he is with a good & kind Lord, & to his care I humbly intrust him.

My dear Betsey I want to know what you are doing; how you spend your hours—O how kind would be the Means, if they were proper & honorable, that would place me only two or three Day to be happy by your side—But how do you pass these burning july Suns & dewy Evenings. O tell me! Are you in health; Your Image rises every Day in my view; I gaze upon it with Eagerness & Astonishment—It is almost the living Betsey; happy me if it was altogether. But I talk at Random; Language my lovely Girl, cannot express that soft Friendship which I feel towards you; my whole Interest is engaged for your Peace; & all my Soul is concerned for your Happiness. I did believe long before we came together that my Fondness for you had arrived at its highest Degree; I was wholly ignorant; Love is of a wider Plan; it is pure, manly & heavenly; it enlarges & softens & composes the mind; So it has done with me; and Thanks to kind Heaven, my Regard for the faithful Object of my first & only Choice, is widening & refining every Moment!—

I have wrote you three Letters before this, one from Philada. & two from Camp: In one of them which you will I hope receive, I have given you a long & clear Account of your four Brothers now in the Service. I can hear not one Syllable of my poor Brother in Canada, I fear—

Every Bosom here is warmed with the Flame of sacred Patriotism. Throngs of men beyond reckoning are collecting, every one of which we hope, & the greater number we are certain, possess magnanimous dauntless Hearts; determined to meet & oppose at every Hazard, the Progress of Tyranny. It is said that more than one hundred thousand Men are watching

LETTERS OF PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

the Motions of the Fleet below us; If this be a large Reckoning, I will only say I had before no Conception of our internal Strength.

I was near New York, within six Miles, when the two ships of War went up the North River; But O what a Battle! All the Batteries that could fire, & two large Ships, bellowing at once! We were in the Stage, & the Stageman, poor fellow, was afraid; But we pressed him, as Officers by Force, & drove on briskly to Town, but the Ships were gone fairly by, & the Fire here at an End; But it began again at Kingsbridge, where we are told, they were peppered well.

The Fleet lies in Plain View, nine Miles distant from New York; seven from our Camp; Every Day we have firing; last night several heavy Cannon were fired, we know not yet the Reason. Almost every Night the Guards along the Shores discover, & bring to, Villains attempting to fly to the Enemy: May Justice work its Course upon them.

I was eight Days in New York; I have been eight Days here, & tomorrow I expect to be removed to the City again. I preached yesterday in a large Dutch Church here to a very large Assembly; Three Battalions, with their Officers were present. The largest Assembly I have yet preached to.

I am roused from Rest early, the Battalion is paraded, and morning prayers are finished before four o Clock! We have evening Prayers between five & six. Our Colonels, Furman & Henderson are highly civil; invite me often with them to dine & support good order in camp. Sometimes I sleep in my Blanket, sometimes on a borrowed Mattrass.

I want you, my dear Girl, to send my surtout by Mr. Mitford, Mr. Peck, or some person coming up; & if I could any Way have a sheet & Pillow sent, I should be much obliged. My Psalm-Book also you will send; & while you are sending some, or all of these, send me your kindest Wishes.

My Love to all Friends; remember me kindly to Uncle, to all the Girls; to Sister, Enoch & Brothers; to Joel & Family; to Mr. Green & Ditto; to all—Do not forget afflicted Mrs. Hunter & Nancy; visit them often I charge you; do not fail. And remember due care of all our Affairs, which will always be acknowledged & honoured by, dear Betsey, your

Philip V. Fithian.

LETTERS OF PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

On margin of first page.

Write to me by every opportunity; by Mr. Peck without fail when he returns, by Mr. Mulford; if you have a Person coming here two Day after you have wrote, yet write by that Person, keep Letters wrote by you: write once a week & send them when you can.

On margin of second page.

This morning there is a heavy firing below on the South of Staten Island but we know nothing yet of the Consequence or Cause. My dear Creature, write away all that Paper I left by accident so that I may have it all here.

To

Mrs. Betsey Fithian

Cohansie.

Per Mr. Peck.

New York—August 3d, 1776.

My dear Betsey.

Since I wrote to you last I have returned from Long Island to this City & joined Col. Newcomb's Battalion. I am myself in good Health; some are now sick, none dangerous. You must if possible send my Surtout; & one of my new Shirts; & if convenient a Sheet & Pillow—

Mr. Donaldson is discharged & carries this; I have been his Friend to get a Dismission & for it he promises to weave our bed-tick; you must apply to him & see that he does it in time. Let me know if you have your Wooll and at what Price. & if your Linnen is wove & done well. And if all our little affairs go on well, even tell me how Bullrock is, whether yet lame, or growing poor.

But most of all, my dear, let me hear from yourself; Mr. Hunter asserts I shall find you as he found Nancy in the Spring; is it so, or does he jest? He tells me that Mrs. Hunter & Nancy are coming to Elizabethtown in this or next Month; How would it do if my Betsey should take a Passage & come too? You will use your judgement, if you can with Propriety, come; if you cannot come thus, I must see you in December.

LETTERS OF PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

Mr. Ewing Esq., has my Chesterfields Letters; you will send for them & put them up safe.

Give my good Affection to Uncle & Family, Sister, & all Brothers. And do not fail to write by every Person you know coming to New York; every failure of this kind I immediately know & every such Default I set down against you as a Breach of what I have a Right to expect. Mr. Hunter & Mr. Caruthers came more than a fortnight since I left you, & not a Line by either, since the week I came away. Blame not Capt. Beatty & Charles any more. They have a sister that can forget her Friends. And even her most humble Servant.

Philip V. Fithian.

To

Mrs. Betsey Fithian.

Cohansie.

Per Mr. Donaldson.

New York—August 4th, 1776.

My dear Betsey.

Yesterday I had all things ready & was going to Kingsbridge; when an Express arrived in Town that the Ships above were moving downwards; As I was going by Water I thought it safer in Town. We are almost ready to receive them & hope when they attempt coming down to give them most hot reception.

You will employ Mr. Donaldson, who is now returning Home, to do your Future Weaving; Show him his Promise in your little Book, & take your Turn. I have lent him for Expences two Dollars, & he promises to weave, so that if he should decline let him know this.

Every thing here is preparing for an Attack, we know not the Issue. May our gracious Father protect & help us. I am, my dear Betsey.

Your most affectionate Husband

Philip Fithian.

To

Mrs. Betsey Fithian

Cohansie.

Per Mr. Donaldson.

LETTERS OF PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

N York—August 6th, 1776

My dear Betsey.

I was most highly happy when I saw our Friends from home come here the other Day—I was happy to see them on their own Account, as Friends; And I was very very glad to hear by them from you. My Desire of seeing you is already grown so strong that I am not without many uneasy Hours every Day, which have no other Foundation than bare Absence from the Woman that I have fixed my Heart to love & protect. You will have no Occasion to think it Flattery or Enthusiasm when I assure you that I bear a separation from you now, with more Anxiety, & real Distress than ever I have done before. There are many Reasons which make it necessary. Friendship is between us, I am certain, real. And it grows by Habit. Every Hour we live, it grows stronger; and makes us live, when together, more pleasant, & makes every Separation more painful. But heaven hath, for a Time, divided us; & to a righteous Heven we submit. If we meet again, surely we shall be tenfold happy. If not here:—if not My charming Betsey, I bespeak your Friendship on the other side of Death!

Do not, while I am absent from you, pass over one Oppertunity of writing largely to me.

By Mr. Brown I have a Letter from you. I thank you most kindly, & read it with the highest Satisfaction. I revived me, at my Heart, to hear of your Health: Your Interest, my dear Creature, lies on my Soul next to my bleeding Country—Next to my dear Jesus do I place, in my Regard our suffering Land; & next to our suffering Land, do I place in my unfeigned Esteem, the Girl that lies in my Bosom & deserves my Love—Oh! nothing but the necessity of defending & establishing sacred Freedom should detain me long from your loving Arms—! But Words only enlarge my warmed Fancy; I will drop the Curtain & hide these tender Scenes, until they can be real.

You tell me you are about removing to Deerfield; I fear I shall have fewer Oppertunities of hearing from you; Certainly our Correspondence will be a little interrupted; yet increase your Industry that Way. Write Letters once a Week & let them be left at Uncles, or some more convenient Place below, & let them come to me in Packets, a few Days in the Date makes but little Difference, they are all from *you*.

I congratulate Mr. Hunter on his infant *General!*

LETTERS OF PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

You tell me you have not received your Shoes. It is, I believe, the Fault of Mr. Mulford the Stageman; you must go yourself to his House & look on his Errand Book about the 12th of July, & you will see the Order I gave him; If he has neglected, you may, if you choose send again; if the Shoemaker has not made them, you may give other Directions; but, if you do not choose to get them; demand the Money which I lent him for that Purpose. It is £0-10s-0d as I wrote; if he disputes it, show him what I now write.

I am very sorry to hear of Uncle growing Disorder: he is like us all in the hands of righteous Heaven.

I can hear nothing from Brother Josiah.

Your Brothers of Kingsbridge & Archie of this City, are well; we know nothing of Charles lately.

As to Brother Jonathan, I say nothing: I cannot dissuade him, & I will not urge him to the Service; he must consult himself & Mr. Moore.

I would not, on my Account, 'til our political Circumstances have a very different Aspect, use a single Argument with any Mortal who is able to contribute at all to the Common service, that should have the remotest Probability of Weakening his Resolution. The Cause requires in establishing a Certainty of Defence, a Force the next Degree below Almighty!

We expect a general Attack every Day; it may be prolonged more than a Month.

Last Saturday our Row-Gallies attacked the Men of War up the River. We had two killed & some wounded: & suffered in the Gallies several were injured: But they have not given over; one came down on Sunday, was refitted & yesterday returned;—it is said the Attack is to be this Day: we will wish them Success.

Your Brother John has gone to Princeton; is returning, & will, I expect, be in Town this Day.

Mr. Mullford came into town on Sunday, he brings nothing from you; Why are you formal & cannot write more than once in such a number of Days? I write almost every Day—I consider that I am writing to my Betsey, my Wife, my chosen Friend, with whom I can be more unbosomed, sociable & every way unshackled, than with any one beside—And when I do not write 'Politicks, I fear not the Criticisms of any. So I wish would be my Betsey's Conduct.

LETTERS OF PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

I have, by Mr. Brown, my Coat—That, with your Letter, if with them also I could see your Charming self would give full Satisfaction to your Lover.

Philander.

To

Mrs. Betsey Fithian

Cohansey.

Per Mr. Brown.

N. York. August 12th 1776.

Dear Betsey.

I have often heard it said, & so have you, that Hours go heavily along to absent Lovers. It is Sentiment, scarcely brave enough for a Soldier, to say that I experience this every Day. But allowing it to be real, & constant, it weakens not my Vigor in the Cause I came here to support. I must have lost totally every soft Feeling of the Heart, & degenerated into a Condition coarser than Brutality, if I was, without hard Necessity, divided from that Cluster of winning Charms which I have known you long to possess. It is hard Necessity that detains me here. And let Misery be the righteous Portion of the Wretch who has been the Cause of it. I discover daily more Aggravations to the accumulating Guilt of the Men who have directed to the bringing America into Subjection. The unnumbered Variety of Miseries, by Hardships, & Sicknes, & the long, & in many Cases the total, & irreparable Separation of the dearest Friends; one of which falls a glorious Sacrifice to Freedom; and the other, inconsolable for the Loss, wastes down the Remainder of a Life, thus made unhappy, in fruitless Tears; These are Facts such as I never saw before, & they prove that human Sufferings are not equal to the Guilt of that Man who has made, through mere Wantonness, so many of his fellow Creatures, who never meditated an injury towards him, so extremely unhappy—O, he merets what the Devils suffer!— But equal Heaven will settle all.

I am now, by God's great Goodness & very distinguishing mercy, in sound Health.

As you have moved to Deerfield I am affraid by Letters will not all reach you; & still more am I fearful that you will have fewer Opportunities of writing to me. This is the eighth Letter

LETTERS OF PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

I have wrote to you since we parted, including the one I sent from Philadelphia; that was dated July 10th; the second July 19th. the third July 22d.—fourth July 28—fifth August 2d.—sixth August 3d:—seventh August 6th:— Let me known in your next whether you have received all; if not, let me know which of them are lost. I have yet only two from you, one by Mr. Hunter; & the other by Mr. Brown. Perhaps you have wrote no more!

I am now so settled to my Duty that I can inform you a little how it runs. I have not been able to do it before. We have public Prayers in the Church appointed for our Battalion twice every Day; in the morning at half after five—Evening at six. After Evening Prayers I visit the Sick in the Hospital; this is my Duty for the Battalion on Week Days—Besides this every Sabbath Day I preach one Sermon in the Evening at five o'clock. This is my whole Duty, it is easy, but is some Confinement. We have the Scotch Presbyterian Church, a large elegant Building in "Little Queen Street" near the Broad-Way; & within a small Distance of my Lodging.

Long-Island. August 18.

But oh— "tempora mutantur," that is, we live in a fluctuating World.— Now I am again on Long-Island!

The morning of our Lord's Day was introduced with a dreadful Noise! The *Phoenix* & *Rose* came down the River last Night, passed us this Morning and are now once more with the Fleet below. The Night before last our Fire-Vessels made an Attempt to burn the *Phoenix*; they grappled a Brig to her & fied the Brig but such was the Alertness & Spirit of the Seamen that by cutting away instantly their own Riggin, She was disintangled & towed off. They found the River however too hot for a longer Stay; & taking Advantage of this long Storm, which makes very full Tides, & this mornings violent Wind at North-East, the adventure Villians came over our hidden Works, & from what yet appears, safely.

Just a quarter of an hour before seven in the morning the firing began. At seven precisely they were abreast of the grand Battery at New-York. They kept over as near Powles-Hook as they could, in order to be as far as possible from the York Batteries. We are quartered on the Bank of the Water, & were in the Place where the fullest View of the whole Action was had. The Morning is rainy, the Wind at North-East, & violent,

LETTERS OF PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

so that they passed briskly, tho' the Ebb was quite expended before they were passed Red Hook. For about four Minutes the Fire was indeed tremendous! This was the Time while they were passing between the Grand-Battery & Government-Island—they then sailed & were steadily surrounded by our heaviest Guns! The lower Batteries at New-York; the Powles-Hook Batteries; the Gallies which lay between New-York & the Island; & all the Cannon on Governors Island; were every one, like incessant Thundred, rattling on them!— When they were passed Red Hook they clued up their Sails & scudded away proudly to the Fleet under only a Main-Top-Sail each!— Thus the British Navy triumphs— And that Damon *Wallace* is, no Doubt, elated with his present expected Security.

But let the Traitors dare to leave these *Castles*, & come abroad, where we can stand on equal Ground; & we then defy even British Prowness— We fear not Tory *George*, & his War-worn Army. We dread them not— Let them ride yonder before our Eyes in their highest Grandieur; yet, even they, ere long, we trust will be affraid.

Our Fire-Vessel burned a ten Gun Sloop, tender to one of the Ships.

But I had resolved to write no politicks to my engaging Betsey; my dear, most dear, Wife— Of War you have enough in the News; my letters I mean to fill with *Love*. None can blame me for being too fond while I am at the Distance of seven score Miles— & you least of all— My Betsey will never blame me for telling what She well knows I have long felt!— But most of all does your Welfare now, tho' I know not why, lie Pressing on my Soul! Still am I thinking over what yet shall happen to her whom I have left behind— Good Heaven be kind to us both, & mark out our Path plain; then give us Courage & Strength, & we will both obey. My dear Creature, like you I figure out to myself many Days of Peace by your side, after these tempestuous Clouds are blown fairly by— And in your wise language, “I wait the Direction, as to our particular Lot, of the Sovereign Disposer of every Event.”

That all Changes whatever may be happy for us is the steady prayer to our Common Lord of your

most affectionate Husband

Philip V. Fithian.

LETTERS OF PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

To

Mrs. Betsey Fithian, Deerfield,

pr. Mr. Bennet.

New Jersey.

To be left at Mr. Jacob Moores
& forwarded from thence.

Camp On Long Island—August 20th, 1776.

To my dear Betsey.

Never weary of thinking, writing & labouring for you, tho I wrote a few Hours ago, I have more, I have Abundance yet unsaid, that I want to communicate. It is not Business so much that I have in view, but the Amusement of my Female Friend; my Betsey, my Eliza, my Cleora; my always mild companion; my Wife— Who tells me in Gloom & Tears that she passes her Days industriously spinning— & her Evenings—let me tell this in your our sweet Words, they are mournful but melting—“In the Evenings I am in my Room. I am fond of being alone, for then it is I most enjoy myself & think freely & without Interruption of my dear absent Friend.”— Blest Maid—! Just so am I most happy.

Yet be not over-thoughtful. Your Philander never lived better, nor passed his days more pleasantly, and cheerfully, or to better Advantage, making this Allowance that it is hard to be quite happy when one full half at least of both Body & Soul is left at home, than he does now— How long I shall be in this Condition is, to be sure, uncertain with me, & is known only to my God;— But believe it I am not more mortal here in the Neighborhood of the British Cannon, than I should be was I happy in your peaceful, loving Arms. Til my God calls me I am immortal; therefore I distain the Menaces of haughty George & all his Minions; and will think & contrive & plan & execute, & be merry; in my needful Duty; & will think & write, & act, for you, without any Controul.

LETTERS OF PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

I thank you most cordially for your Kindness— By Mr. Brown I had my Coat; & Mr. Peck brings my Psalm-Book, Sheet, Pillow & Case—and a most needful Article, a Towel— For all these I thank you— But I have more Wants; never will you have done distressing me, you will say. But I think this shall be my last Demand upon before I see you; Cool Weather is approaching fast, & I see no probability now that I shall be discharged before the Enlistment has run out; if you please therefore, my good Girl, & when you have a safe Oppertunity, you will send two Pairs of my best woolen Stockings; &, if ready I should be glad to try two of my new shirts— I have not moved the two new Shirts you made me last; they lie yet clean in the Bottom of my Trunk & If you will send my others in a few Weeks I will not move them til I return.

I had bought me a Psalm-Book, yet I was glad to have one for a Clerk, it saves me the Labour of reading.

Since I came upon the Island I board & Mr. Hunter with a Widow Dutch-Woman, on the Bank of the River; where we have a perfect prospect of New York, at the Distance of not quite a mile; of Powles-Hook; the Jersey Shore quite to Bergen Point; Governors-Island & the Batteries on it; the East End of Staten Island & the Enemies Fortifications & Tents, & their whole vast Fleet, at the Distance of seven Mile; the Batteries at Red Hook; — Our Brigade is quartered in Houses & Barnes up in the Country. Your Brother Archee is in our Brigade, in Col. Van-Cortlandt's Battalion, in Capt Morrels Company, & is now on the Island; I see him often, he visited me in New York, but here we are yet unsettled; he is well & gives Love & a Brothers Duty to you, Mrs. Green & Family— He promises me he will go down, if our Lives are spared, this Fall, & see his Sisters & Cohansie.

Your other three Brothers are all to the Northward.

Your letter by Mr. Peck came unexpected in a measure, but it was to me as Life from the Dead! For some Days before I had been under a dullness arising, as I think, from the long cloudy, damp, Weather— I received it, a little after Dark, last Saturday Evening, it was written the Saturday before; I was in my Room, I was playing on my Flute, & trying to be cheerful so, yet still, in Spigth of Musick, I was dull— But your letter at once, cleared all away!

Yet I shall hear from you but exceeding seldom now, from Deerfield you can have but few Oppertunities—

LETTERS OF PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

I wrote by Mr. Donaldson & my Mr. Brown, both of which you ought to have had before you wrote by Mr. Peck, & they were down many Days before, no doubt, & yet you had received neither!—

But I am not going to admit a complaining Thought; it would be otherwise difficult & dangerous to hear from my Betsey at all if I was among the Servants of Tyrant Britain.

You tell me you are not capable of following the Pattern I set you; my dear Girl, do not, I pray you, suppose that I meant to lay any Restrictions in any small Degree on your Manner of writing—Write your native unshakled Thoughts, they will be to me most welcome, they will give the highest Delight—think not while you are writing to him who belongs to your Arms, & wishes ardently to be there the moment his honour will allow it—think not of any thing fine or nice in what you would say—Write as tho' no other Person on Earth could ever see what you wrote, but me; & if Friendship is your Subject, if all the World should see such a Letter, they would justify & praise it. As you would talk, if we were together, without regard to Order or Length, as much without any Regard at all either to Order or Length, or any thing else, but to set down a few vagrant Thoughts, when you have a Chance of sending them along; So is the Wish & will be the great Satisfaction of Laura's.

Philander.

I am not yet weary of talking to my Patriot female Friend, tho' I see the Bottom of my Paper will oblige me to stop soon; Give my Love to all my Friends. Mrs. Green in Special. Take good care of our little Affairs. And be careful of your own Health, & soon, I pray God, you will see again your faithful & most affectionate Husband.

Philip V. Fithian.

To Mrs. Betsey Fithian

Deerfield

per Mr. Bennet

New Jersey

To be left at Mr. Jacob Moores &
forwarded from thence.

LETTERS OF PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

Camp on Long Island August 21, 1776.

My dear Betsey.

Mr. Hunter tells me this Day first something that I would have you imediately enquire into:— Mr. Hunter received for me, as he came through Philada. of Dr. Witherspoon 10£.— I gave Mr. Hunter Directions to leave 5£ of this Money with Mr. Mc Calla.— He left this Money & took a Receipt; but Mr. McCalla intimated to And. that he has an open Account against me— I am on the other hand of Opinion;— I am certain that I have paid them in full.

I request you therefore to go down to Greenwich, & in the Desk you will find a Number of Receipts filed; look out for three—the first is for my Black Suit, somewhere about 9£, the second for my brown Suit near 6£— & the last for my mixed Coat that I have now with me, near nine Pounds—When you find these Receipts, then send by the first good Oppertunity & demand of Mr. McCalla the 5£. If he declines paying it, produce the Receipts; At any Rate get the Money— I am a little vexed that Books are so badly managed. Do not fail I beg you.

Write me whether you find the Receipts & whether you find them as I wrote by the very first Oppertunity. I am, my dear Betsey

your affectionate Husband

P. V. Fithian.

To Mrs. Betsey Fithian

at

Deerfield

per Mr. Shepherd.

Camp on Long Island. August 26th 1776.

My dear Betsey.

It has generally so fallen out since I left you, especially of late, that by safe Oppertunities, I have happily frequent Intelligence of your Situation & Circumstances. There has, since I wrote last Week, a very considerable Alteration taken Place with Respect to our Enemies Situation. They are on this Island & our near Neighbours; But I write you this Letter on Politicks (as you know I had declared against writing Politicks to you) on Purpose to free you of any Fear you may possibly entertain by listening to vagrant uncertain Reports.

LETTERS OF PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

Last Thursday our Enemy landed down by the Narrows, to the Number it is yet said of Several thousand & began immediately (as soon as they could form) their Way toward New York—The Alarm Guns at Red-Hook & Cobble-Hill were fired about twelve o'clock. Soon after the Rifle Battalion which was stationed at the Narrows came up setting Fire all the way to the Stacks of Wheat &c. & driving Cattle, Horses &c. within our Lines. The Drums beat to Arms. And instantly this vast Body of Men were at their Respective Posts! For one single Hour, my dear Betsey, & not more than a single Hour, my Heart fluttered— All was new! To see the Ravages of War presented visibly in view—Valuable Property, indeed the Staff & Comfort of human Subsistence consuming in prodigious Fires as far as we could see— Ourselves conducted within a Fort & ordered to defend it at all Extremities—To see Horses straining every Way, & Expresses one after another informing that they were advancing in a well-formed Collumn to our Lines—Drums & Fifes on all Quarters making the very Air echo *To Arms! To Arms!* All these made my thoughts flutter & divide for a few of the first Moments; but I had not been in the Fort an Hour til I was composed As I have been since I came to the Camp. And now all is well as ever. Their Progress is stopped & New York is yet unhurt.

Immediately upon the Alarm, three Battalions were sent off to intercept & annoy their March; these Battalions proceeded to the Border of the Plains of Flat-Bush two miles & a half from our Camp & lay in Ambush to distress them should they proceed onwards to our Lines; But they wisely halted in Flat-Bush & before Night we had seven Battalions spread before them, two of which are Rifle-Men, & are determined to keep them on the Plains.

We could not hinder their Landing on Account of their Guns & the Country thro which they marched is wholly clear & level as a Meadow four miles Distance. But the remainder of their Way here is for us most advantageous. It is very hilly; all the Way woody; & the Road on each Side the whole Distance has a fine strong high stone Wall—Nothing can better suit our Purpose.

I was down two Day ago to view our red-coated Neighbours; from the Heights we have them in plain View; they appeared numerous but not formidable; While I was there the Fire was steady; our Rifle-men give them no Peace; And the Noise even of Field-Pieces grows familiar.

LETTERS OF PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

We have killed by the best Intelligence, more than twenty of the Enemy already— Two of which, both Hessians, have fallen into the Hands of our Lads—None but the Hessians engage us yet; they have all Rifles, short, large & heavy; they appear in general to be elderly men, & our Boys say they shoot well. We have had none yet killed—several have been Wounded, some badly—Colonel Marten on Fryday was wounded in the Breast, it is however hoped he will recover—One of the Rifle-Men has his Thigh broke:—Another had his Leg shot away in the small by a Six-Pounder, it was immediately cut off, & we hope he will not die—One poor Lad died yesterday of a Wound in his Belly; the first Victim here!— Most unluckily on Fryday the Enemy surrounded a Lieutenant, Sergeant & three Privates of Col. Johnstons Batt: & made them Prisoners!—

But plundering & robbing becomes them now: We must treat them as we would the Savages of the Wilderness. We have now on the Island a great Army. & an abundant Reserve still in New York— And still I say that we fear not “Tory George.” Now his Army is on shore we can fight them even hands. Our Army is eager for a General Attack, but we know not yet whether it can be allowed them. Upon the whole, my dear Betsey, I charge you, as you value my quiet, or your own Good, to be at Ease; & with a Christian Gravity mixed with a Christian Cheerfulness, pass away the Hours in Usefulness, if possible, to yourself & to the World until we meet once more. If Heaven is kind to us both & continues its usual Protection, that desirable Hour will soon arrive— A number of the Philada. Militia is here; among them is P: Webster. The others of that Body are at Amboy & Elizabeth Town. The very Flower of rising America is now in the Army, many young Gentlemen of Rank & Fortune are in the Character of Privates, & there with spirit & Dignity perform their laborious Duty.

But I have written Politicks quite long enough. I may not either frighten you or weary you with them.

Of what I wrote you last must not fail to be mindful— I mean the Money which I lent Mr. Mc Calla. Mr. Hunter informs me that my accompt is not taken from his Book— I am certain that I paid Johnny his whole Bill & have Receipts. As I wrote you, go to my Desk & look out the Receipts; take copies of them, but do not send the Receipts away; & then by the first safe hand, demand the five Pound which Mr. Hunter lodged with Mr. Mc-Calla for me, & if he refuses, send to him the Coppies of the

LETTERS OF PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

Receipts—if he still should not pay the Money; let the Matter all rest till I return. When you send for the Money let Mr. McCalla know that it was my direction that the Money should be paid to you, & a Receipt for it given to him; he will send you the Money at once.

I hope you have before now got your shoes; if not, I advise you to get the 10s of the Stageman; & go yourself to George Hall; give him Directions, & he will suit you. If you have shoes of him, let him charge them on Book.

Remember my earnest request to keep an accurate & a clear accompt of your whole domestic Management.

Most of all take care of my Books & Papers, keep them, I intreat you secure; some of them to me are of very great Moment; keep them, then secure.

I recommend you, my dear Betsey, my tender, loving Wife, most heartily & strongly to the care of Heaven— And to him I intrust myself; may the God of our Fathers be our Guide— Let him lead us & protect us & we will be safe— Hand in hand, with the sweetest Familiarity, have you & I passed all the Hours which Heaven has allowed us hitherto to spend together— And so we will travel together all the Way thro' this thorny World. As many of the Troubles as I can I will remove out of your Path; & those which Heaven calls you to encounter, I will help you over in the best manner I can, by my steady Presence & fondest Assistance. It is impossible that you can be wholly happy on this side your heavenly Home, I wish indeed you could— But heaven hath been long a witness that the strongest Efforts of a faithful Lover have been exerted to make you so— Since then my utmost Ability has not been able to make you as happy as you ought to be, if Providence should divide me from you, think it not a very great Breach upon your Felicity—turn your Attention more to him who gave & took away—& say “Philander loved me & was kind; but as all things here are uncertain, when Providence took him I freely gave him up”— I am your most affectionate Husband

Philip V. Fithian

To Mrs. Betsey Fithian
Deerfield

per Mr. Ludlam

To be left at Mr. Jacob Moores,
& to be forwarded from thence.

LETTERS OF PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

N. York. Sept: 1, 1776.

My dear Betsey.

I am sure you will be glad to hear from me your former intimate. I believe agreeable companion, after the Report you will hear from the Public. We have been, it is true, under the prudent Necessity of leaving all our Lines on Long Island last Fryday Night; but we have left them with Profit & Honour, for they could have surrounded us.

The Day of the Battle was indeed terrible; Noise and Blood, & Flight before our Enemies! But we expected to fight when we left Home & I cannot say that the Reality of an Action is much more frightful than the thought of it at Home. Both are indeed unwelcome. The whole Army is now in Town. The Ships in a long black string lie floating below, some of them within shot of the Town. Every tide we expect them up. Every Day since the Enemy came ashore we have firing of small arms & cannon, but since the Engagement with but little Execution.

We know not yet the Number we have lost, it is however great, more than a few Hundreds we fear; but they yet come in, having hid in the Long-Island Woods.

Generals Sterling & Sullivan are Prisoners. The latter is come into Town, & expects to be exchanged for Gen. Prescott.

We hear our Enemies are landing up the East River not far from Kings-Bridge, & are attempting once more to surround us. If they do we shall be compelled to fight them in the Field; & for even this now we are ready & desirous. I tell you again, my dear Betsey, that we are not afraid of this Army that belongs to Tory George. Tho' they conquer us, unto Death we will hold fast our sacred rights; & even in Death we can & we shall despise & hold in the utmost contempt, the Tyrant Wretch who dare break in upon us, & attempt to take from us the great Gifts of Heaven! In such good & vast Attempts we shall surely be intitled to Triumph tho' we be conquered & captivated! Sacred indeed is their memory & fair & lasting will be their Fame, who fall fighting for America's Good. We can hardly find a place in our Hearts for Sorrow that they died; we rather envy them the Dignity & Sweetness of their Repose as they lie sleeping under the Laurels that must always shade & adorn their Graves.

But not one Syllable more of Politicks. I can afford you in this Letter; Because I write at all, you will know that I am yet alive; I when I tell you, you will believe that I am possessed of a Heart at Ease. For authentic Intelligence you must not look

LETTERS OF PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

to me; I have it not; no one here can give it expect a very few of the general officers; we know not the Number of our Army—nor do we know, til we read the News, whether in the Battle the other Day we lost five hundred or five thousand—so that you must read the public Papers for Intelligence of the State of the Army;— And my Letters you must read to know mine.

You are not, I hope, much uneasy with the Reports you will hear of our Confusion & Retreat. Tho' the Loss to our Army is considerable it is yet reparable, & we expect it will, by the common Assistance of Providence, be made up to us with Advantage before the Campaign is finished.

It was conducted with the utmost safety & Haste or your faithful Lover had been now at least a Captive!

But I resign myself to the will of Heaven. My steady strong Prayer is that you may be safe. I do not speak larger than the strictest Truth when I say that your Happiness is more my Concern than my own. Never did I feel my Heart so warmly engaged for the Welfare of any of my fellow Creatures as it is every Hour for yours. I have always, from the moment I first saw you, possessed all the Feelings of a passionate Lover—since you allowed me your Company, we have supported the purest, most virtuous Friendship—and since Heaven has made us one; Oh! None but Heaven, & you, & I, can tell the Greatness of the Felicity we have possessed together. Sure none on Earth had higher Joys; none on Earth had fewer Wants. We were as near perfect contentment in each others company as mortals can come; O, we were very blest til cruel Britain compelled us to separate!— Cruel George, why, without Reason, are so many Mothers robbed of their beloved Children— So many Lovers forever divided?— Why, since all must lie on thy guilty Head! But Tyranny & Ambition have no controul.

Your Brothers John, Reading, & Archee were on the Island & had the honour of retreating with us. Yesterday John & Reading marched again to Kings-Bridge; Archee is yet in Town.

Mr. Linn & Evans, with nine more Chaplains, besides Mr. Hunter & I, were on the Island, & retreated.

I want to know, my Betsey, how you live & pass your Time—Whether you have spun me yet a coat; if it is at the Weavers already; & will it be fine—whether your Linnen is wove & whitened, & made up; & is it very good—whether your Bed-tick is wove & check: Linnen, & if they both suit you— Whether you are not absolutely sick of the Confinement of these

LETTERS OF PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

domestic Duties, which belong to the marriage State—Whether Gim has yet learnt his manual Exercise— Whether you have written a scrawl to either of your four Brothers in the Service these two months— Whether you intend to write either them or me another Letter this campaign— Whether Bullrock is lame yet, & if you ride once, & no more, every Week— My dear Creature, I have not been on horseback since I left Home— But there are many more “Whethers,” the greater Part of which I must leave till I see you & ask them from you.

You may inform any who ask you that Capt. Kelsay has not yet lost any of his Company— We have lost only two of the Battalion; of whom one was shot.

Two young men from Greenwich Mr. Ludlam & Wethrington were up last week; & now Mr. Hollinghead, & we receive no Word from Home. We hope our People, of both Sexes are engaged in spreading Flax & Seeding, as they have no time to mention their Friendship to their Friends who are fighting!

Mr. Hollinshead is appointed Chaplain to Col. Furman's Battalion of Jersey troops, & is now gone home only to prepare for the Camp Duty. I am, with my Love to Mr. Green, Mrs. Green, & Friends, my dearest Girl, your most loving Husband & Friend.

Philip V. Fithian

To Mrs. Betsey Fithian
Deerfield

per Mr. Hollinshead.

New York, Sept. 3d. 1776.

My dear Betsey,

We are still in this City where Freedom is likely to suffer her sorest Persecution. Our proud & subtile Enemies envy us ye happy situation & are planning how they shall take it from us. It is said they are carrying Boats in Carts over this End of Long Island, that they may cross the Sound, into this or Connecticut Province; & having the Force of their Army there, we expect they will crowd their Ships up the North River, & by thus surrounding us, they expect to interrupt the coming in of Provisions & thereby either make us Prisoners, or compel us to fight them in the Field.

LETTERS OF PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

We know that the Wisdom of Experience of the British Officers in War are by no means contemptible. Very far from it. They lay deep & solid Schemes, & carry them with Vigor— They are improving just now their whole collected Might, having added their Wisdom & Force together, that they may subjugate this our growing envy'd Country. May the God who has allowed them to come thus far, forbid them coming nearer, & distress them where they now are. After landing on long Island they did not wait many Days til they put themselves into such a Situation, that our General thought it prudent to quit the Works we have been long erecting with much Design & Labour, and retire with the Army into this City; the leading Circumstances of which Evacuation you will see in the Papers.

They gained Long Island, however, it is yet believed with the Loss of some of their choicest Heroes—two General Officers fall as rich fit Sacrifices at Freedom's Altar!

Our Army, a little disappointed at the Retreat, is now again in Vigor & the highest Expectation of Triumph in the End, notwithstanding these unwelcome Strokes they have lately given us. They are now in Possession of Staten Island, Long Island, Block Island to the East, & Governors Island by this City; which Places, tho' they are not yet on the Terra-Firma, afford them a larger Range than we had intended them. Their manifest Design now is to surround us, for which Purpose a Frigate went last Night up the Sound which we expected is designed to cover the Boats while they are transporting the troops from Long Island on to this: So that you may expect another Action & of more Extent, than the Last. I mention it to you now that by having Time to consider deliberately over all the possible consequences of such a movement, before it is actually made, your Mind will be less moved with any Consequences of the Reality, & better able to bear then, should they be most against us.

Our Enemies have every Advantage against us here, on Account of our Situation which must be surrounded by navigable Water; And the Britons do "rule the Waves;"— And which is yet worse, the Forces are so numerous & the Passage is now so easy from us to them, that the execrable Monsters Communicate all our general Orders so fast as they are given out. So that our Circumstances are perplexing, & the Struggle will be hard! But—America will yet triumph; & the Progress of Britains Domination must be checked, tho' it may for a Time seem to advance.

LETTERS OF PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

From the Aspect of things now I cannot but augur some great Event to be near at Hand. The wise God who knoweth all things, & he only can tell whether it will be for us prosperous or adverse. We look up to him, as to an almighty Friend, & trust in him alone for Wisdom & Power to defend the great Cause which we have adopted. We do not fear our Enemies, nor shall we ever fear them. We have every Motive to Valour that Men can have— All that smoothes the rough rugged Places of the Road of Life, they threaten to take from us— If there is any Balm that can heal a human Pain, that medicine they would plunder from us. They only proffer to leave us the hardest means of living— And, my dear Creature, so far from allowing this to take place am I, that, rather than *you* should be injured by any ungracious unpreviledged Wretch, I would lie here on the crimsoned Field & bleed out my Life in your Defense!

Be not, however, cast down too much with Anxiety or Fear. Dwell not on Miseries that have never taken Place. If you must think of Days to come, let not your Apprehensions make them more dismal than the usual Course of Providence has been in time past. Remember always that useful Admonition of our kind Saviour sufficient to the Day is the Evil of it."

This has been my Desire & Endeavor, especially of late. The Days are Evil; Future contingencies are most uncertain— I have given up myself to him who lent me to the World; if I have done my fellow Creatures any Service att all, the Profit is theirs, & be the Glory God's— But the all-important Design of my Life has been to prepare for Eternity; this thought too I have diligently & soberly traced; And the Issue is; that, resting on the Promises in the Word of God, with a firm & only Reliance on the Merits of the gracious Saviour of Sinners, I resign my Soul & my Body to my Maker, trusting in his forgiving Mercy—

And this I warmly recommend to you, my tender, faithful Friend:— I scruple not to assure you that you have long had my supreme earthly Regard. Not a single Rival have you had in my Breast since the Hour you consented to be mine—I have Reason to believe the same of you. I trust our Hearts are undivided. Let us then go hand in hand, in spite of any Interruptions from this gay seducing World, onwards to the peaceful Gates of Paradise: However thorny & rocky we find the Way; at the End is the flowery Garden of God—the Tree of Life—the New Jerusalem—that great, beautiful, everlasting City!

LETTERS OF PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

The Months are marching along, & if my Life is spared, if we are Victors, I shall soon be with you.— July & August are gone forever by; I cannot recall them, that I may spend their Hours happily with you— September is now whirling swiftly along, soon he will be also gone past; October & November then remain— Only a few Days divide us, if we are to meet again— And if we are so much blessed, I pray it may not be soon to part.

It is long, very long since I have heard any thing at all of you; but you cannot write from Deerfield. You know too well how much I value what you say; how much I love to read your Name,— too well you know this, to let an Oppertunity go by you of writing something to me.

Your Young Brother Arkee wishes to hear from You:— Often he asks me “When did you hear from sister Betsey.” “Is she lost that she never tells us where she is.” For his Comfort I can usually inform him that I saw you about the Beginning of July, & have heard from you three Times since. He is always satisfied & glad to hear of you at any rate.

As I am writing this Moment Orders are brought in for our Battalion to march to Day up to Kings Bridge. There are your Brothers John & Reading. We are almost continually upon the Move & expect to be til our Term is expired.

I keep no copies of the Letters I write this Summer, you may preserve, if you choose, those I write to you.

I hope you go often to Greenwich & visit our Friends there, Our poor afflicted Uncle in Special, frequently see him; never had this Country a warmer Friend than he, his Services now are over, but the spirit deserves to be respected— Often visit afflicted Mrs. Hunter & Nancy & her infant Heroe!—

Visit all our Friends; they respect you highly & desire your Intimacy; Beware of entangling yourself in unnecessary & malicious Reports of every kind; Act openly and kindly, but never act haughtily, nor speak satirically, & you will be more than esteemed by others, as you are by me you will be very much loved.

My kindest & strongest Friendship I send, & pray that the Peace of God may be with you & with your most affectionate Husband

Philip V. Fithian.

To Mrs. Betsey Fithian
Cohansie.

per favour Mr. Moore.

LETTERS OF PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

Mount Washington: Sept. 9th 1776.

My dear Betsey.

In my last I told you that we had Orders to leave N. York; in this I shall acquaint you a little with our present state.

Mount Washington is a spacious, very high Eminence on the Bank of the North River, nine Miles above N. York, & three below Kings-Bridge. It commands the River, & the country for a great Distance round. On this hill we have a good Fort, in which we have Cannon of many Sizes & several Mortors. Opposite to this Fort, or rather a little above it, lie the Chevaux de Frize, which are now supposed sufficient to interrupt the Navigation of Ships of any considerable Size— On the other side of the River & about a Quarter of a Mile below, on the very high Bank, is another Fort; these it is expected will make it impossible for Ships to lie long near our sunk Works. The Bank of the River here is rocky & high; the Admirals lofty mast does not overlook the common surface of the Country. Three Battalions are encamped here; our, Col: Foreman's, & Col: Hutchin's; Dayly we expect another Attack, & the Design of this Division of the Army is to prevent the Progress of the Ships up the River, & to prevent their landing.

Another Division consisting of five Battalions are stationed on the other side of Harlem River, toward the Sound, to annoy them should they attempt to proceed up that little Water. Among these are your Brothers John & Reading.

Great Bodies of Men are arranged allong the Sound to prevent a Landing of our Enemies— Besides a sufficient Number in N. York.

I have been told that marvelous & false Reports are circulating among you of the late Battle & our Retreat from Long Island. I do not indeed wonder that so great an Event should take up the Attention of those who have Sons, Husbands & Brothers here. But I hope *you* will not give your Ear to each vagrant circulating Tale. Let your Reason be a Guide now; lean upon it as a staff to uphold you—but rather trust to the Grace & Mercy of Christ, & let all the Commotion of these Days whirl on, my fair Betsey, my amiable Pattern of Kindness & Good. Nature, will be safe & composed— The Consequence of that Battle is indeed most momentous; we have been by it sharply chastised—But the Events of War are multiform and exceedingly mixed. It has been for us in time past to be usually Victors— We hope & yet expect to be finally conquerors, & triumph

LETTERS OF PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

over these our tyrant Foes—I say finally—perhaps a long space of bloody combat lies between—but at last sacred Freedom will be established here—& tho' last Week we lost many hundreds, in a Skirmish that was by no means decisive, & consequently expect we shall soon have another of still greater Extent, & more importance either to one Side or the other—and if in the Action you should be robbed of your kind Brothers; all your other Friends who are in the Army; & me—and if an hundred others should suffer a loss as great—if the Cause was by it supported; The Blood of your Friends would not deserve, or call for, a single Tear! The Purchase would then be cheap, so mighty is the Right we are struggling to secure—Wherefore leave grieving for customary contingent Losses; Enlarge your Understanding, as much as you can, & be acquainted with the whole Cause; know that it hangs together; these extensive American Provinces are linked into one & either stand or fall bodily; carrying this steadily in your mind, you should consider Actions with Relation to their great End, & til the Capital begins to totter, be not anxious, my dear Betsey, on Account of the Loss of a few of the Members.

I am told that you hear many of our Troops are disheartened & returning Home. Shame & Guilt lie on the Heart of him who insinuated first the Calumny!— It is a Falsehood invented by a Tory or a Coward. Our Army is impatient of the Delay of the Day of Battle, & wish for nothing more than to meet their Foes.

You have heard too that our Battalion was cut off in the Battle last Week; of this Mistake you will be fully certain before you receive this. Our Battalion was to have gone to the Woods the very Day of the Action, & to parade for that Purpose by seven in the Morning; but before that hour the Enemy were in sight of our Lines; the Orders however were counter-manded, & we were placed before six in Fort Green— We have lost but two in our Battalion; one by sickness, the other shot—In the Battle on Long Island our whole Brigade has not lost fully forty, tho' three Battalions were in it! In the Retreat our Battalion left a considerable Quantity of Baggage—My Loss in the Flight was but small, tho' in my present Circumstances Considerable; I lost a neat pewter Porringer & Spoon; & a Bottle of Choice Bitters— All my other Chattels &c: were safely transported to N. York— And Myself.

LETTERS OF PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

I have often read & been told that any Scenes even the most terrifying in Nature, may, by having them continually in View, become familiar & no longer dreadful— I believe it religiously— This worst of Wars, this civil Contest, grows less formidable; even the deadly Bullets when they go whirring by off-right me no more— At first, when I heard a Bullet go by me, I always dodged my head with the utmost speed, till I saw Gen. Washington, the Afternoon of the Battle, stand on the Parapet of Fort Putnam, & with a Glass view the Motions of the Enemy, with the utmost Composure, while our men & the Enemy were contending with each other within Gun-shot of the Fort— I caught the Example, my Tears fled, & I think they are forever gone!

Another Battle we expect is near, after which you will be more fully acquainted with the Condition of our Army; they are endeavouring to surround us, & if they cannot effect it, their late Advance is not of such great moment either to the carrying their Measures, or overturning ours—But if they can, an Ocean of rich American youthful Blood will stream that Day, for we shall fight our Way through them at every Hazard!

I must I believe give up my Resolution of writing nothing of Politicks to you; insensibly I fall upon them; the Narration of what daily passes before my Eyes, & also rare, & to me new, seems most natural when I write to any— I write but few Letters, & I can write to none with so much Freedom & Pleasure, & with so little Reserve, & so great Certainty that I shall not offend, as to you. I am sure of your Attention, & I am sure that you will pass over my Blunders. And when I consider you as the rightful Sharer of all my Joys, & believe that you would kindly & sincerely sympathise in all my suffering, I have the tenderest Feeling for you that the human Heart can possess—

I hope you take proper Notice of your Cohansie Friends; do not neglect one—Visit at proper Times—Do not stay too late, always be at home by Sunset or soon after. Your Health is precious to me; I shall wish to find you in Sprightly Vigor & glad to meet me, when I may by Gods Permission return; & for this, as well as on your own personal Account, I hope you will be careful—Spin not too steady— Let your Work be various, & it will be easy & healthful.

In the midst of the Noise & Smoke that we have from Time to time here, & the continual Expectation of more dismal Prospects, I cannot but cast my thoughts forward & plan off many

LETTERS OF PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

mild serene Evenings to be spent with you at Deerfield or Greenwich I care not much which, the ensuing Winter— O grant it merciful Heaven— If together I am certain we shall be pleasantly happy. I can be nowhere on Earth, so much suited as when honourably with you.

Every Hour brings us nearer to the Time when we may be together. Soon will be the Commencement at Princeton, & I suppose the Mrs. Hunter's will be up. You have given me no Information of your joining them, & such is like to be the situation of our Army at that Time that I fear it would be out of my Power to see you if you should come. But if you have laid your Affairs to come, Polley Beatty will be most glad to see you at her Fathers, & I will come if I can, provided you let me know it.

My Love & Duty to Mr. Green, Polly & Family; & Deerfield & Cohansie Friends. I am, my dearest Betsey, your always faithful.

Philip V. Fithian.

To

Mrs. Betsey Fithian

At Cohansie.

per Mr. Holmes.

Camp Near Kings-Bridge, Sept. 19: 1776.

My dear Betsey.

Amidst all the Distress & Ruins of this dreadful War I am yet alive & yours. Our Enemies pursue us close on from Place to place. But we drubbed them well last Monday since which they have laid quiet. Your Brothers John, Reading & Arckee are well, I saw them since the Battle. We expect to have a general Engagement soon, & are not dispirited in the least by our late Losses. I hope to see my dear Betsey by the tenth of December & not before— But wonder much that I do not hear from her; as it is now more than a Month since she wrote me a Word that I have received:—And since that time I have wrote with this seven long Epistles, a full sheet in in each— One Aug. 19—One 21st—26th— Sept: 1st 3d 9th & now the 19th.

I pray God daily that you may be preserved & in Health. My Duty to Mr. Green & Family. Last Sund. & Monday were two terrible Days; But on Monday our brave Heroes made them

LETTERS OF PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

give Way. The English Army, Tories & All, is not supposed to be less than 30,000 strong. But our Army wishes to attack them. Peace, & God's Blessing be with my Betsey, my dear Wife, forever may you be happy.

Philip V. Fithian.

Mrs. Betsey Fithian

Deerfield

West Jersey

Mount Washington. Sept. 28 1776.

Madam,

I have a very disagreeable Task imposed upon me by Mr. Fithian, to give you an Information which will be so distressing — He was taken very ill last Sunday, and has lain without any Intermission ever since— He is much reduced. His Disorder is of a complex Kind— It partakes of the nature of the Fevers incident in this season of the year; and of the inflammatory kind. He lies in a Tent without a Bed— He has every Thing that can be procured in Camp. But the best accomodations here are very poor for sick People— He has given me no orders to request any of his Friends to come to see him, but were I in his situation I should wish to see so near a Friend as a wife— If any of his Relations should choose to come there will not be the least Danger of the Enemy in the Journey—Pray make yourself as easy as possible— He is not past Recovery tho' very sick— My Respects to Mr. and Mrs. Green— I am your Friend

Andrew Hunter.

29th Sept.

Mr. Fithian is a little better this morning.

To Mrs. Betsey Fithian

Cohansie New Jersey

LETTERS OF PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

Mt. Washington. 8th Oct'r. 1776.

Dear Madam

I am sorry to inform you that my dear Friend and your Husband is in all human probability within a very few Hours of Death; he was taken Sunday 22d September and has continued very bad ever since. I have the satisfaction to assure you that nothing has been wanting for his comfort that it was in the power of his Friends to procure, he had a good Feather Bed to lye on; I would advise you not to come, as it can be no satisfaction either to him or you now & you may depend that nothing shall be wanting in our last services to his remains that humanity and decency can require & the circumstances of the place will admit; I must repeat it that I do not write to you in the least suspence of Mr. Fithian's disolution he cannot possibly survive many Hours. I am with great respect

Your Friend & Servant

Thomas Ewing.

To

Mrs. Elizabeth Fithian

Deerfield

favourd by Mr. Ewing.