

CORRESPONDENCE
OF THE
AMERICAN REVOLUTION;
BEING
LETTERS OF EMINENT MEN
TO
GEORGE WASHINGTON,
FROM
THE TIME OF HIS TAKING COMMAND OF THE ARMY
TO
THE END OF HIS PRESIDENCY.

EDITED FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPTS
BY JARED SPARKS.

VOLUME I.

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which I am directed to transmit to you. You will notice the last resolution relative to an attack upon Boston.* This passed, after a most serious debate, in a Committee of the whole House, and the execution was referred to you; and may God crown your attempt with success. I most heartily wish it, though individually I may be the greatest sufferer.

I have paid Mr. Fessenden, the express, in full for his three journeys as express to Philadelphia, deducting only sixty dollars, which he says you ordered him; so that there will be no pay due to him for services performed heretofore, only for his expenses now from this place to you. If this adjustment be not right, please to inform me.

I have the honor to be, with sincere sentiments of esteem, Sir,

Your most obedient, humble servant,

JOHN HANCOCK, *President.*

P. S. Fessenden being indisposed, I have sent a special express, as Congress were anxious their resolves should reach you as quick as possible.

FROM JAMES LYON.

Machias, 25 December, 1775.

SIR,

You doubtless remember to have seen an application from the Committee of Safety in this place, for

* *In Congress, December 22d.* "Resolved, That if General Washington and his Council of War should be of opinion, that a successful attack may be made on the troops in Boston, he do it in any manner he may think expedient, notwithstanding the town and property in it may thereby be destroyed."

leave to go against Nova Scotia, which might probably have been taken then with very little difficulty. But we were informed that such an expedition could not be carried on, at that time, with proper secrecy, and that there was imminent danger from the King's ships. The same difficulties may possibly lie in the way now, if any troops are collected, and sent from any part near the head-quarters. I apprehend that secrecy is as necessary now as ever it was, and if only one proper person, at a suitable place, be ordered to conduct the whole affair, it will probably succeed.

There have been many applications, I dare say, from many persons and places; but were I to point out a suitable place, I should mention this, as it is near to Nova Scotia. I should be more at a loss for a proper person to conduct the enterprise. I know of fitter persons than myself in many respects, but they are strangers to the province and people. But I have dwelt there for years, and have a personal acquaintance with almost all the principal men, and know the country well. I should rejoice, therefore, in the appointment to this necessary business; and if your Excellency, together with those only who must necessarily be acquainted with the appointment (for I choose none but they should know any thing of the matter), in your great wisdom, should see fit to appoint me, I will conduct the expedition with the utmost secrecy, and, *Deo adjuvante*, will add to the dominions of the Continental Congress another province, before our enemies are able to defend it. All I require is sufficient authority to collect as many troops as I see fit, in this eastern country, not exceeding one thousand men, and vessels to convey them to the place of action, and blank commissions for the necessary officers of a thousand more, to be

filled up as I shall find expedient in Nova Scotia, where the men are to be raised, put into the Continental pay, and left there to defend the country, when taken; and farther, that a sufficient quantity of provisions, ammunition, arms, &c., be sent here, about the middle of March.

Your Excellency may inquire as much about me as you please, of Benjamin Foster, Esq., Captain Stephen Smith, Captain O'Brien, and Mr. Shannon; for these gentlemen I should choose to have as companions, but do not choose that they, or any other persons living, should know any thing of the design, if this petition is granted, till it is time to embark, except those persons only who have authority to appoint. The above-mentioned gentlemen know nothing of this application.

The reduction of Nova Scotia is a matter of great importance, and lies near my heart, on account of my many suffering friends in that province, and on account of the many advantages that would arise from it to this Colony, and to this place in particular. But should the Government appoint another person to conduct the expedition, I shall cordially acquiesce, and pray for his success, as I ever do, that God may smile on all the American arms, till all our enemies are subdued before us.

Your Excellency will not take amiss what my zeal for the honor and safety of my country constrained me to write. I am, most respectfully, your Excellency's

Very humble and obedient servant,

JAMES LYON.