

A historic duel. A letter written by Brigadier General Lachlan McIntosh to Colonel John Laurence, Military secretary to General Washington, three days after the death of Button Gwinnett being a true relation of the duel, of the events that caused it and of its consequences

A HISTORICAL DUEL

A LETTER WRITTEN BY BRIGADIER GENERAL LACHLAN McINTOSH TO COLONEL JOHN LAURENCE, MILITARY SECRETARY TO GENERAL WASHINGTON, THREE DAYS AFTER THE DEATH OF BUTTON GWINNETT, BEING A TRUE RELATION OF THE DUEL, OF THE EVENTS THAT CAUSED IT AND OF ITS CONSEQUENCES: AFTER ONE HUNDRED AND SIXTY YEARS THE AUTHENTIC STORY OF THE HISTORICAL DUEL, WRITTEN BY THE HAND THAT KILLED BUTTON GWINNETT THEREBY CREATING ONE OF AMERICA'S GREATEST AUTOGRAPHIC RARETIES.

PRINTED HERE FOR THE FIRST TIME, FROM THE RECENTLY ACQUIRED ORIGINAL LETTER FOR A FEW FRIENDS AND CLIENTS BY **THE AMERICAN AUTOGRAPH SHOP: CHRISTMAS 1937.**

Savannah in Georgia, 30th May, 1777.

Dear Sir,

As I hear you are shortly to set off for Philadelphia to Congress, I will trouble you with the deposition of the two Seconds in the Late affair between the Unfortunate Mr. Gwinnett & Myself, to prevent misrepresentations, which I have reason to Expect from the Unremiting tho' undeserv'd Malice of the relicks of the party. When the affair first happen'd, it seemd to give a general satisfaction throughout the State to all parties as if an unhappy Division was hereby at an end & afterwards, Mr. Gwinnett's Death which was evidently oweing to the unskilfulness of his Doctor, appeard to make no alteration in the mind of any one, except myself, who was partly the unfortunate tho' innocent & Instrument of it. No information was Lodged, nor prosecution commenc'd against me, all parties visited me, & even his wife publicly declar'd me innocent & altogether blameless, & often requested of my health. Yet the wicked, unwearied, & restless Inveteracy, of old Hall & Wood & their abbettors, whose designs & unanimity by no means suit, has artfully work'd the matter up in Secret untill now, they have brought it before the assembly, who have attempted to bring the Chief Justice & other Magistrates to account for not taking notice of it, & deprive me of my command in the army, as they say I am, or should be under arrest, altho' I have only pass'd my word to Mrs. Glen to appear in case any prosecution should be commenc'd, & take upon themselves to direct the very detail of the duty, which ruins & saps the very foundation of all military discipline, & that Subordination &

respect so necessary in the army to Superior officers. They have even encourag'd some officers of our third regimt: just arriv'd from Virginia, to enter into Combinations, & remonstrate the assembly against Colo. Habersham that unless they break him they will all throw up their commissions, & their men will follow them who have been so amazingly Expensive to the United States, & giving this ungentleman & dishonorable reason, that he was my Second in a duel & as they say contrary to an article of war. In short Sir, contempt & disobedience of order is become the sure road to promotion amongst us, which all lies with the assembly from the Colo. to the Ensign, & Commissions fill'd up with out the approbation or consent of their Commanding officer—many of those who serv'd their Country from principle & with Zeal, & not for gain, have been teiz'd into a resignation, being too honest to mar performances & chagrin'd that the service cou'd not be carried on with out any degree of propriety, or usefullness to the State, unless the Congress, fixes some line between government of their army & the interference of the Civil government of this restless & unsettled state, it will not only become useless but a Menace to the Inhabitants, ever since Mr. Gwinnett was disappointed in the Brigade Generals Commission which he expected from Congress, himself & party seem'd to loose sight of every thing else, than to render the army obnoxious, & Create the utmost Confusion & disorder in it, wherein they us'd the utmost Art, Invention & industry on every Occasion, & when they found themselves every way disappointed by my Circumspection & caution, they fell to personal abuse, slanderous & false insinuations & assertions to my prejudice, Knowing my declar'd aversion from principle to private Dueling, till at length my best friends were astonish'd at my forbearance, & my enemies Constru'd it into a meaning which made them prompt the unfortunate man to his own destruction, tho' it was intended to bring me into the Dilemma if I refus'd the challenge on my pretence they wou'd Immediately Cry out "how unworthy is he to hold his Commission", altho' on all occasions I have expos'd myself more than any soldier under my Command in defence of the States (Copyright 1937 by THE AMERICAN AUTOGRAPH SHOP, MERION STATION, PENNA.)

Gift Eleanore Bruno Feb. 9, 1939

which that very Juneto often acknowledg'd & if I accepted it & fell, they wou'd get rid of one with a pretext of Policy & design against the freedom peace & order of the State, or have an opportunity of plaging me if that shou'd be the fate of my antagonist. Thus Sr. I have troubled you with a short acct. of this affair that you may be enabled to do justice to my character in congress or elsewhere as you go along, yr word may have estim given you or my friend Mr. G. Walton (to whom I beg you may Communicate this) a fuller acct. of the matter from the beginning, I heartily wish you a good journey & am Dr Sr. Yr Most Ob. Hbl

LACH: McINTOSH.

Colo. Lawrence

Tuesday 3d June.

Notwithstanding the malice of my enemies I have this day been allow'd to enter into recognizance only to appear at sessions next octobr. I am recovrd so well & but in a few days I expect to resume the exercise of my duty as usual.

Mrs. Gwinnett I am inform'd has enter'd a prosecution against the Doctor who seems to be generally blam'd for the death of her husband.

The Seconds acknowledg'd the inclos'd paper to be literally true & the whole matter of fact as it happen'd but think it improper they should sign or swear to it, as it might take themselves in.

Pennsylvania — Portfolio 162.

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