

Sir

1781 May 31st From Lancaster
Colonel Adam Hubble
Lt. Col. Lane County
May 24th 1781

I received the favour of your letter of the 10th Instant, a few days since - enclosing a Requisition from Council confirming the call of 2nd Coys of the 8th Battalion of Lan. County Militia, - The whole of the 2nd Coys of the three Battalions, including non-com Officers &c. amount to a few more men than the number required - however I find we have use for them - as our situation is by no means the most defensible. - The Baynards, and under the care of Mr. Hoys also came safe to hand. -

A daring plot was discovered on the night of the 16th instant, at the barracks, in which are confined the British Prisoners - which however by the early intelligence we received was happily frustrated. - About 11 o'clock at night - I was called upon by the Officer of the Guard who informed me a Soldier of the 71st Regiment had come to the guard house (one of 2 black houses) desiring admittance, that he had a matter of importance to communicate - he was accordingly admitted and gave the following intelligence - That the Sergeants of the Prisoners had a private & unanimous meeting that day and formed a plan to effect the escape of the whole - They, after their meeting broke up - informed the Prisoners of their Requisition, and gave directions for

for the whole to be in readiness on the preceding day to avail themselves of the opportunity when the Gates opened for the delivery of their Wood - the whole to rush out, surprise the Guard & disarm them - they then would proceed to town - where a certain Subaltern (his name we cannot find out) would conduct them to a Magazine of Arms & Ammunition - - that they were all to take - then to fight their way thro' the Country and effect their escape. -

I immediately on receiving the information after making some necessary Disposition of the Guard entered the Barrackyard, and ordered the whole of the Sergeants (upwards of forty in number) to parade, which after some time was effected - I then gave them in charge of the Guard and had them conducted to the Jail - were they are now safely lodged. - We have 300 Prisoners here - the number of Disaffected people thro' this Country is very considerable - so that our situation is truly alarming when I consider the state in which I find the Militia - should the Prisoners, once clear themselves of the barracks - The few men on Guard, who no doubt would do their duty - would not be able to stop them - The well disposed Inhabitants, who would be willing to lend their Aid & assistance - for want of Arms - can only be idle Spectators - and perhaps see their own & Neighbours property destroyed - without being able to give the least opposition. -

If some ways & means could be fallen on to arm the Militia of this Town - I should consider it safe from any attempt of the Prisoners or their Equipages. -

By the particular desire of the most respectable Inhabitants of this place - I am to fortify Council that

that they do am- and relief- after the operation of their
town - the present Guard by an equal number of Men
from the 8th Battalion (with Militia) only - and this Battalion
to be used (so long we have the Prisoners with us) for that
duty. - I write answer various good purposes - The
farmer will now be wanted in the fields to gather his Harvest
- and the expense of granting Country Militia who called
upon to perform a term of duty can be said - as the Town people
have their own houses to go to - besides should there be a call
for militia to man the town - this town must in a
manner be left naked, as the Guard merely would not be
sufficient to secure 800 Prisoners exclusive of their Companies
which I believe are not inconsiderable. -

Other reasons could be advanced - but Council -
will from what has already been said be able to determine
on the matter. -

I could wish in the present critical moment of
affairs, to enlighten and give Council as little trouble as
possible - But necessity as well as duty obliges me to demand
a further indulgence and give Council a short narrative of our
unhappy affair which happened on the 19th instant - between
the Guards - and Col. Moylan's Dragoons - It appears one
of the Dragoons - for some offence, which he had committed
was put into the Guard-house - a Rumour by the Dragoons was
agreed on - they accordingly assembled armed with Pistols
and swords - marched to the Barracks - and, one more
daring than the rest stepped up to the Sentinel, who previous
aimed him not to advance, or he would put him to death.
This however had no effect - he (the Dragoon) first cocking
presenting his loaded Pistol - attempted to seize the Sentinel's
arms, who instantly, fired & killed him - the deceased's
Pistol

Pistol on his falling went off & I wounded one of the Militia
Men in the thigh. -

This gave alarm to the Town, & the Horse
finding their situation rather precarious made off to their
respective quarters. - Ever since this affair the
Inhabitants have been kept in continual alarm, on account
of the threats and behaviour of the Dragoons - who swear vengeance
against the Militia, and particularly the Sentinel - who his
a good Soldier did his Duty on his post (an enquiry was held
on the body of the deceased) - He for his security has retired in
the Guard-house ever since - they have threatened to force
the Guards and seize him - indeed last evening ^(12 O'clock) some attempt
was made but the activity of the Detachments after speaking
some men who were coming towards him and receiving imper-
tinent language, fired - and this day this was it is not yet
clearly found out we are informed one of the Horsemen was
that this is the man. I have called on the Lord & Officer of the
Horse, and suggested he with his Officers should assist themselves
in putting a stop to this affair very ~~fast~~ by them is taken
I believe to find out the leaders and have them punished
The Magistrates meet this afternoon for the same purpose
My aid and assistance shall not be wanting - but the im-
posed Government, and the continual alarm the Inhabitants
are kept in - has determined me to give the most pointed
orders to the Guard - and I have no reason ^{to doubt} but they will
do their Duty. -

I have in consequence of the depletion of Council stopped the
collecting of fines unless from those people who chose to pay their money
the rate of 10 for one - stop'd the collector from collecting the rate for
until you further orders - which should be held to him of as far as
possible - we meet with difficulty in drawing Candles paper &c. for
the Guard, which they cannot possibly do without from the Quartermaster
he thinks it necessary and order from Council or Board of War for the
purpose should be sent - I am with great respect your Obedient
servant
W. D. Smith Adm. H. B. J. 1786