

The British Peace Commission of 1778.

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Introduction.

In a time when peace negotiations are a matter of discussion thruout the world, a study of a peace commission nearly one hundred and fifty years old may not seem inappropriate. It is a treatment of Anglo-American relations, but very different from the sort which we are given to-day when, despite the differences of opinion which exist on the Irish and other questions, England and America are allies and friends. In 1778 the mother country looked upon America as an erring child which had gone astray and which, when punishment seemed to fail, might be brought back into the family by honeyed words and promises. The American daughter had however declared herself of age and no amount of persuasion or threats was able to make her recall the declaration.

Note-- Most of the documents referred to in this paper are found in Mr. B. F. Stevens' collection of "Facsimilies of Manuscripts in European Archives Relating to America 1773-1783." Parliamentary Debates, the Annual Register, and the Gentleman's Magazine give us the opinions of English legislators, while the Journals of Congress reflect the American point of view. The private correspondence of Horace Walpole, George Selwyn, King George and Lord North in England, and of Washington in America has added some illuminating material.

Conditions in America, France, and England
in 1777.

To understand why George III sent to America in 1778 commissioners empowered to give the rebellious colonies the very things which had been refused to them most decidedly in 1775, we must see what were the changed conditions in America, on the Continent, and in England which caused the king and his ministry to make these concessions.

In the spring of 1777 the British renewed the plan of campaign which they had begun the preceeding year. New York was in British hands; Washington was at Morristown. Burgoyne and Lord George Germain in England made the three-fold plan to cut off New England from the other colonies and so conquer it. Burgoyne was to lead an army from Canada to Albany taking Ticonderoga on the way; Colonel St. Leger was to take Oswego on Lake Ontario, then Ft. Stanwix on the Mohawk, then down the Mohawk to Albany; Sir William Howe was to ascend the Hudson from New York and join the other armies at Albany.

How Burgoyne captured Ticonderoga, but floundered thru the wilderness, and in need of supplies attacked the American stores at Bennington with most disastrous results to him, is a well known story. Nor had St. Leger succeeded any better for Herkimer and Arnold had driven him from Ft. Stanwix.

Howe, altho he had been informed of the campaign, was given no instructions to join Burgoyne so he had sailed south to capture Philadelphia. The instructions which he should have received were left in a pigeon hole by Germain in England, and forgotten while he went off on a hunting trip. Howe accomplished his purpose altho it took him from July until November to take Philadelphia against Washington's interference. Meanwhile Burgoyne, deserted in the northern wilderness, had met his fate. He had kept on in spite of obstacles as he felt obliged to obey instructions and join Howe at Albany. As he delayed, waiting for aid which never came, the American forces kept increasing and closing in upon him. After two efforts to escape frustrated by Arnold, Burgoyne surrendered his army at Saratoga October 17, and thus ended the magnificent plans of the British for the year 1777.

This astounding defeat of Burgoyne at Saratoga, the news of which reached England December 2, caused a very great sensation in both England and France. In France it led Louis XVI to the almost immediate signing of a treaty with the United States, an alliance for which Franklin and the other American agents in Paris had long been working and hoping. In England it brought consternation to the ministry and to the people who sympathized with them; some of the Opposition rejoiced.

Political opinion in England was much divided. The Opposition, with such leaders as Burke, Fox, Chatham, and Rockingham largely favored America.¹ Burke and Chatham wanted peace by a withdrawal of the military forces and a repeal of the distasteful acts, but a continuation of English supremacy. Fox openly admitted the fact of independence, and said that America would never return to its subjection to Great Britain; commissions and debates on the subject were useless. He accused Germain, Secretary of State for the American Department, of disgracing his country in every capacity.²

The ministry was very weak and inefficient as the prime minister, Lord North, and his subordinates were simply the agents of a king who would have no one whom he could not dominate. North, "an amiable but weak man, keenly susceptible to personal influence,"³ lacked the firmness to oppose measures which he knew were inadvisable. His colleagues were either violent or corrupt. Germain had quarreled with nearly every officer under him; Sir William Howe resigned because he could get no satisfactory treatment from Germain.⁴ Sandwich, as Sec-

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1. Parliamentary Debates Vol. 19, page 486.
 2. Parliamentary Debates Vol. 19, page 527.
 3. Lecky-American Revolution, page 340.
 4. Gentleman's Magazine Vol. 49, page 165.

retaryof the Admiralty, notorious for the irregularities of his private life,¹ was very scornful in the parliamentary debate of March 16, 1775 referring to the conquest of America. He said their troops were raw, undisciplined, and cowardly, and would run away at the first sound of a cannon.² Such a ministry which had failed in its conduct of the war now tried to redeem itself by offering concessions.

After Saratoga King George himself renounced all hope of subduing America by campaigns and battles; yet he was determined never to acknowledge its independence, but to punish the colonists by an endless prolongation of the war. His plan was to withdraw the army from all places in the colonies except New York, Rhode Island, and Florida; to concentrate part of it in Canada and Nova Scotia, and to send all the best of the troops against the French and the Spanish West Indies; to destroy the coast trade of the colonies, bombard their ports, sack and burn the villages, and turn the Indians loose upon the inhabitants. These methods he thought would make the colonists penitent and ready to accept terms.³ Little did he understand of the spirit of Americans!

Something very evidently had to be done and altho the king seemed to be in no haste , North finally persuaded him to allow

1. Jesse-George Selwyn and His Contemporaries Vol.11, pages 59-65.
2. Parliamentary Debates Vol.18, page 446.
3. Trevelyn-George III and Charles Fox Vol. 1, pages 4-5.
Donne-Correspondence of George III With Lord North No: 444.

the proposal of measures of conciliation with America.¹ Before any plans were perfected however, the English agents in France endeavored to discover France's plans and also to sound Silas Deane, Franklin, and other American commissioners on the subject of concessions.²

The intense rivalry and hatred between England and France at this time undoubtedly hastened the action of both countries. On December 6, 1777 the French minister assured the American envoys that they might depend upon three million francs from Spain, and that Louis XVI would now certainly favor an alliance with America.³ On December 17, came a message to these expectant Americans that the French government had decided definitely to conclude a treaty with the United States as soon as a courier could return from Spain, the only stipulation being that America should make no treaty with England except as an independent state.

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1. Donne -King George III to Lord North . Letters 444 and 445.
 2. Stevens -Facsimilies Vol. VIII, 766; XX, 1780.(References are to the number of the document)
 3. Donne Vol. 11, pages 111-112.
Parton-Life of Franklin Vol. 11, page 286.

Parliamentary Discussion of and Action on
Conciliatory Proposals.

The matter of the French treaty was probably soon known in England, at least to the Opposition, thru Franklin's correspondence with friends there.

On December 10, when it came time for adjournment, North told Parliament that after the holidays he would lay before them a plan for treating with America. This statement caused great surprise among some people and indignation among others. Mr. Townsend said that an adjournment for six weeks at such a critical time would be hazardous; Burke said now was the proper time for inquiry into American affairs, not six weeks hence. Chatham in the House of Lords made a stirring speech on the question of adjournment, urging the need for prompt action and deploring the delay of an intermission at such a time of crisis and need in the country. Events of a most important nature might take place before their next meeting. He pictured the perilous state of the British army and navy at a time when a war threatened with France. He said that America would naturally distrust offers of conciliation from the ministers who had deluded them, and had brought on this cruel and devastating war; he prophesied that America would shun offers from such men as they would shun snares to betray them.

1. Parliamentary Debates Vol. 19, pages 589-591.

2. Ibid--Vol. 19, pages 597-602.

In spite of these arguments and partly because of the scathing words of denunciation the ministry was receiving at the hands of the Opposition, Parliament voted for adjournment for the customary six weeks, until January 20, 1778.

The feeling of uneasiness grew among thoughtful men and when Parliament reassembled the situation was very grave. There was every indication of much danger of attack by the French and very little preparation for it; altho North had said in the Commons on December 10 that he did not believe either France or Spain had any intention of molesting England, but England was prepared for them anyhow.¹ Few people agreed with Lord North.

The Duke of Richmond in the House of Lords,² and Fox in the Commons spoke against the use of force in America and the sending of more troops over; it was madness to continue the war. As three campaigns had been unsuccessful it was unreasonable to suppose that a fourth, less well equipped, could accomplish anything.³ A very general sentiment for peace prevailed both in Parliament and outside. David Hartley, a member of the House of Commons, had, on December 5, spoken against a continuation

1. Parliamentary Debates Vol. 19, page 591.

2. Ibid-- Vol. 19, pages 654-658.

3. Ibid--Vol. 19, page 683.

of the war because of the enormous expense it would entail. Because he believed that America had resisted Britain justly he suggested giving America perfect legislative freedom, and a cessation of hostilities, also forming a trade agreement.

On February 17, Lord North made a long speech before the Commons presenting his conciliatory proposals and the suggestion for the appointment of a peace commission. He asserted that he had always known that American taxation could never produce a satisfactory revenue. He therefore proposed to quiet America on the question of taxation by a bill which would repeal all taxes and express Great Britain's determination never again to place any revenue tax on the colonies; he would repeal all the acts passed by Parliament since 1763 which had troubled America; he would put all these matters into the hands of commissioners. To these men he would give very ample powers in treating with America. He explained that he had not presented such liberal propositions before because he thought the moment of victory was the proper time for offering concessions. This was a strange statement in view of Burgoyne's defeat, but when he planned these acts North had not known of the disaster. Military matters in America had been extremely disappointing to him. In spite of this fact, however, he concluded his address

by saying that the concessions were made from reason and propriety, not from necessity. The men who were listening to him did not seem to feel the force of his last words for they believed that something unusual must have happened to so change North, and his speech was followed at first by a melancholy ¹ silence.

During the course of the debate on North's proposals Fox and Grenville inquired about the alliance between France and America of which they had been hearing.² North answered evasively that it was very possible that such a treaty had been signed, but he had no authoritative communication on the subject as yet. But in fact these bills were introduced into Parliament twelve days after the French treaty had been signed, and they were hurried thru early in March in the hope that they might reach America before the news of the French ³ alliance did.

Horace Walpole writing to a friend about February 17, expressed the opinion of an unofficial personage on the subject of the French treaty and the proposed commission. He referred to February 17 as a day of confusion and humilia-

1. Parliamentary Debates Vol. 19, pages 762-767.

2. Ibid --Vol. 19, page 775.

3. Donne- King George III to Lord North No. 450.

tion and said, " How one blushes to be an Englishman! Who can at once reconcile a supplication of alliance with the high and mighty states of America, with a total impossibility of obtaining it?---The warmest Americans cannot deny but these gracious condescensions are ample enough to content that whole continent; and yet---such accomodating facility had one defect,--it came too late."¹

On March 16, North admitted in the Commons that the French treaty had been signed, but not ratified by the American Congress, therefore he still had hopes that the conciliatory bills would be productive of good results.²

This was not the first time that the subject of conciliation or a cessation of hostilities had been discussed in Parliament.. For at least a year previous to this time leading members of the Opposition had been almost constant in their attacks upon the war policies of the ministry. In January 1777 Fox declared in the House of Commons that there could be no peace in America without England's relinquishing completely the claim of taxation.³ On the other hand, North declared that the administration never meant to relax in pursuing the claims of its country so long as its legislative

1. Toynbee- Letters of Horace Walpole Vol. X, pages 191, 192, 194
 2. Parliamentary Debates Vol. 19, page 911.
 3. Gentleman's Magazine Vol. 47, page 5.

authority was disputed.¹ Wedderburn, Soliciter-General, said that "till the spirit of independency is subdued in the colonies it is idle to come to any resolutions or revisions as a means of conciliation."²

In May 1777 the Earl of Chatham had eloquently denounced the use of Germanmercenaries, and expressed a fear that the war would be fatal to Great Britain. "You have proscribed your own children," he said. He moved that an address be sent to the king urging some measure to stop the war.³ A few months later he stated that since Parliament were the aggressors they should make the first move toward conciliation; the colonies were entitled to redress.⁴ The Duke of Grafton and Lord Camden reviewed the mistakes of the past in the conduct of the war,⁵ and showed that nothing had so far been accomplished. The Marquis of Granby on November 20, 1777, moved as an amendment to the king's address a consideration of the cessation of hostilities and a re-establishment of peace, but his motion was lost.⁶ About the same time Chatham offering a similar amendment in the House of Lords declared emphatically, "It is a ruinous and destructive war; it is full of danger; it teems

1. Gentleman's Magazine Vol. 47, page 4.

2. Ibid-----Vol. 47, page 5.

3. Ibid-----Vol. 47, pages 251-253.

4. Ibid-----Vol. 47, page 514.

5. Ibid-----Vol. 47, pages 299; 511-513.

6. Annual Register Vol. 21, page 47.

with disgrace and must end in ruin."¹

Lord Howe, British naval commander in America, and his brother, Sir William Howe, head of the king's land forces, had been created commissioners to treat for a restoration of peace with the colonies, but they had accomplished nothing, partly because their powers were limited, and partly because their chief business was to fight. A sword in one hand and an olive branch in the other must have presented an odd spectacle. Although the Howes were probably better liked in America than any other Englishmen at this time, partly because they represented a country which was spilling the blood of its children their offers were not favored by the revolutionists.²

1. Annual Register Vol. 21, page 50.

2. Gentleman's Magazine Vol. 47, page 169.

Instructions for the Commission Outlined
and
Members /Appointed.

In view of the past attitude of the ministers it is hardly a matter for surprise that Lord North's proposals of conciliation which had been advocated all along by the Opposition should have somewhat amazed Parliament. Among the ministers, however, there had been for some time correspondence as to the exact subject matter and form of these bills. On January 31, 1778 the king had written to North that there was no hurry about the plan of conciliation as he wanted to wait to see the action of France, hence the delay which was one cause at least of England's failure with America.¹

Even tho the king was in no haste others of the government had the matter under consideration. William Fraser, Under Secretary of State, has left in his handwriting a statement of views on the advisability of appointing a commission to treat with America since difficulties seemed to attend the further prosecution of the war. Since Great Britain obviously cannot secure all she started out to get she must make some concessions which would be better made at the outset. The

1. Donne--King George to Lord North No. 444.

object of the commission will be to gain an opening for a treaty. That she may not defeat her own purpose England must give the colonies what they have asked for, the restoration of the conditions existing in 1763; the commissioners will have power to repeal all objectionable acts. If America is to have these privileges, however, she must obey trade regulations, admit the authority of Parliament, and contribute to the support of the empire, altho colonial legislators may levy the contribution, such sum to be proportioned to the wealth and extent of the individual colony. The whole document gives us the impression that Great Britain feels she is being very magnanimous in her treatment of her rebellious subjects, whereas she is thinking of her own interests primarily.

William Eden, Under Secretary to Lord Suffolk and afterwards one of the commissioners, was very much interested in the plans. His first idea was that the matter should be brought before Parliament in an address from the king, expressed in a conciliatory style, but firm and determined. The address should contain a defense of Great Britain's motives in undertaking the war, but also a declaration of her interest in the colonies. Eden had rather an elaborate plan for the levy of the colonial contribution to the defense of the British Empire as he said the

colonies were prosperous, Great Britain, in debt, and it was their duty to assist.¹ This idea does not show a great deal of advancement over the reasoning of England at the time of the Stamp Act.

In a letter to Lord North written in the same month Eden expressed a fear that the powers of Parliament were not great enough to provide for this commission ; they should simply give their approbation of it when it was presented in the king's speech. This looked very well on paper, but we know that the Opposition was not very much inclined to give their approbation to anything the ministry or the king proposed. This proved to be the case as the later debates testify.²

Wedderburn's views on conciliation and the commission were similar to Eden's. The commissioners might treat, he thought, with any colonial agent upon the matters which caused the war, and might agree upon the repeal of any act not necessary to maintain their just and constitutional dependence upon Great Britain. The acts discussed were to be repealed three months after the arrival in Great Britain of the notification of the proceedings for conciliation, unless different provision should have been made by Parliament. No agreement made therefore, was to have force until established thru an act of Par-

1. Stevens Vol. 1V, 348.
2. Ibid ---Vol. 1V, 345.

liament. The object of the whole commission would be to establish colonial confidence in and dependence upon Great Britain. Two important facts are revealed by these statements: first, that the colonists were not so far wrong when later they distrusted the offers of the commissioners in America for fear that Parliament would repudiate their acts; second, that the idea of colonial independence was not considered as possible by the British government.

Attorney-General Thurlow further outlined the work of the commission proposed. It was to consist of five men appointed by the king, three of whom would be a quorum. They might declare a cessation of hostilities; might suspend trade acts with certain restrictions. Where a colony had no governor or commander-chief, the commissioners were empowered to appoint a person for the place, -if the colony before the war had been a royal province.

The declarations in regard to taxation show that England was not averse to causing dissention and separation among the colonies, if she did not deliberately plan such division. The plan was that the king should leave the collection of taxes and duties to the colonial assemblies, each colony to contribute according to its means and ability. Only the colony

1. Stevens Vol. 1V, 357.

2. Ibid--- Vol. 1V, 358.

which desired to return to the allégiance of Great Britain would receive special consideration, and after the passage of this act England would not collect any duty or tax, or lay any new one on such colony except such as referred to the regulation of commerce. The revenue of such duties was to be put to the credit of the colony which paid it.¹

Thurlow stated that the question of taxation " has by sundry misrepresentations been the means of misleading many of His Majesty's faithful subjects" who still acknowledge the justice of their contributing to the common defense.²

Some perception of the difficulties involved was shown in Wedderburn's statement that it was hard to find words disclaiming the right of taxation which would suit the colonies and yet not disgust Great Britain; any immediate declaration of rights and privileges would be too extensive for England, yet too limited for the colonies; a conditional declaration would certainly produce nothing but opposition to the conditions.³

Lord George Germain, Secretary of State for America, in writing to Eden February 10, 1778, said that he did not trust America very far, and he disliked to surrender the

1. Stevens Vol. 1V, 360.

2. Stevens Vol. 1V, 361. Notes on the draft of a bill submitted by Eden.

3. Stevens Vol. 1V, 368.

right of taxation, yet he approved of a commission with ample powers.¹

The bills presented by Lord North on February 17, 1778, concerning the readjustment of taxation and the appointment of a commission, were, as we have seen, hurried thru Parliament because of the certainty that France and England would soon be at war as a result of the Franco-American alliance. The measures passed March 2, and on March 13 when the news of the alliance was formally communicated to the English court, the ambassadors of the two countries were withdrawn and the long expected war had come.

It was at this juncture when a war with France was begun and one with Spain was very probable, when a large army of excellent troops had been captured and public opinion in England was divided on the advisability of raising new armies, that many even of his enemies felt that only the great William Pitt, Earl of Chatham, could save the country; but King George was too obstinate to consider giving him an opportunity to head a new ministry.² He clung to Lord North in spite of the latter's repeated requests to be allowed to resign. The king would not have a ministry which was not submissive to him. Lecky, the

1. Stevens Vol. IV, 370.

2. Parliamentary Debates Vol. 19, pages 723-724.

English historian, says, " This episode appears to me the most criminal in the whole reign of George III, and in my own judgment it is as criminal as any of those acts which led Charles I¹ to the scaffold." Very soon after this, on May 11, Chatham died, only a month after a last dramatic appearance in Parliament from whence he was carried mortally ill. Altho Lord Chatham did not favor American independence, the colonies lost one of their most consistently loyal friends by his death.

Some individuals had hopes of winning America back from her friendship with France thru the good offices of Benjamin Franklin, who was of course well known in England. David Hartley, a former friend of Franklin, wrote to him at Paris on February 18, and expressed a most fervent hope that nontreaty had been made between France and America which would defeat Great Britain's purpose of conciliation. He referred to Franklin's good influence even yet in England. Franklin received many such letters, some of them offering him a pension in return for his influence for England, but they affected him not in the least; neither did he put much faith in the commission idea.

The next step in England was the appointment of the commissioners.

1. Lecky--American Revolution, page 352.

2. Stevens Vol. VIII, 789.

Eden suggested to Wedderburn that two of the commissioners be commanders stationed in America, and he named the Howe brothers. The qualifications he outlined for the commissioners are particularly interesting to us as he was himself later judged by them. The persons to be sent, he said, should be members of Parliament, preferably some from both houses. All should be men of ability; one should be particularly conversant with the detail of points in dispute, and also perfectly acquainted with the interests of the commission. All should be capable of understanding the nicety of the several propositions. One at least should have " a known firmness and strength of mind," yet conciliatory manners. They should not have made statements in Parliament which would be inconsistent with the present business. They should be men of family weight; one a lawyer, one from the moderate opposition, and one a Scotchman.¹

Hatzell, Clerk of the House of Commons, expressed similar ideas. They should not be men, he said, just chosen to give them a lucrative position, but "such men as upon the whole² cool and dispassionate men in both countries may approve." A little later Hatzell wrote to Eden suggesting that Eden himself

1. Stevens Vol. 1V, 374.

2. Ibid Vol. 1V, 375.

would answer the requirements. His present position would not be interfered with as the commission was only a temporary appointment.¹ Eden said later that he went under protest² because others could not be found.

The first men chosen for the commission were Carlisle, Jackson, Eden, and the two Howes. Jackson, who made a good many objections when he, Eden, and Carlisle met at North's house for instructions, seems to have been gladly dropped by the others. George Johnstone, a Whig and one time governor of Florida, was substituted. Governor Johnstone had shown more friendliness to America than had either of the other men so³ his natural fitness for the position was the greatest. Johnstone had spoken in Parliament in favor of repealing the restraining acts. He said that if Great Britain had not endeavored to restrict the liberty of the colonies they would never have sought independence.⁴ Altho Horace Walpole said that Johnstone went as a member of the commission for the sake of the salary, he is more kindly judged by most of his contemporaries.⁵

Lord Carlisle, head of the commission, was a Scotch

1. Stevens Vol. 1V, 376.

2. Ibid----Vol. 1V, 372.

3. Ibid----Vol. 1, 101.

4. Parliamentary Debates Vol.19, pages 520-521.

5. Donne-King George to Lord North Vol.11, No. 482.

nobleman of moderate ability who favored a conciliatory policy toward America. Wilkes, in Parliament spoke slightingly of Carlisle and his grand manners; manners, wit and dress which had made him very popular in some circles. ¹ Probably an excessive love of gambling which had at one time controlled Carlisle still affected his reputation. He had been a member of the Privy Council and Treasurer of the Household for over a year at the time of his appointment as a commissioner.

William Eden, before mentioned, was a Tory characterized as a man of mediocre talents. Altho he was connected with the ministerial party both from politics and from position, he did not always feel kindly toward either North or Germain as some of his private letters to Wedderburn from America show us. Neither did King George love Eden very much if we may judge from his correspondence with North where George once referred to him as " that perfidious man." ²

The Howes were included because they had composed the former commission in America and the king did not know how to leave them out. As it happened neither one served because General Howe left America almost immediately after the commissioners arrived there, Sir Henry Clinton succeeding him both in command and on the commission. Lord Howe resigned

1. Jesse-George Selwyn and His Contemporaries Vol. 11, page 129.
2. Donne-King George to Lord North Vol. 11, No. 464.

his position as head of the naval forces in June 1778, and returned to England, partly on account of his health.

Before the date of sailing Clinton's name had been substituted for that for~~that~~ of Sir William Howe because Howe's¹ speedy return to England was then well known to the ministry.

That the commissioners appointed were not all the best of friends comes out as side lights on the situation in various letters of the time. One of Eden's friends wrote him that a man in the House of Commons wished that he and Johnstone had gone in different ships as he feared constant quarrels.² King George wrote to Lord North that the Johnstone and Carlisle³ were not friends they now kissed hands. The three men seem to have had no such trouble, however, as others feared they would.

The question of compensation for the commissioners was apparently one cause of the king's dislike for Eden for he thought the demands made were exorbitant. He therefore stipulated that the pay should come out of the expense account for America, not from his civil list. In spite of the king's disapproval Eden's plan was sanctioned and the commissioners were given the rank and allowance of ambassadors during their term of office.

1. Stevens Vol. 1V, 443.

2. Stevens Vol. V, 494.

3. Donne--King George to Lord North Vol. 11, No. 482.

The items allowed for by their salary were: equipage and plate money 1600 pounds; salary at 100 pounds a week, 4625 pounds, making a total of 6225 pounds for the year of their appointment. Perhaps it is no wonder the king objected! The list included the cost of furniture, clothing, the salary of secretaries, the maintenance of a wife, (Mrs. Eden was the only woman in the party) and general living expenses in the colonies suitable to their state. Ambassadors were usually allowed 400 pounds a quarter for extras.¹ The commissioners were to receive the one hundred pounds a week from the time of their arrival in America; the right to draw from secret service money was also to be exercised by unanimous agreement among the commissioners if the need arose.²

Before the commissioners sailed there seems to have been doubt in several minds of the success of their mission. Carlisle in writing to a friend after the news of the French alliance had been communicated to England, expressed his feeling that the commission idea ought to be abandoned.³ Fox in a parliamentary debate a little later claimed that when the ministry sent the commissioners out in the dark in regard to the evacuation of Philadelphia they did not expect them to succeed in⁴ their undertaking, but such a claim cannot be substantiated.

1. Stevens Vol. IV, 421.

2. Stevens Vol. IV, 447.

3. Ibid ---Vol. I, 101.

4. Gentleman's Magazine Vol. 49, page 4.

The Voyage of the Commissioners

and

Arrival in America.

After several delays Carlisle, Eden, and Johnstone went on board their ship, the "Trident", April 16, 1778, but did not sail until April 21.¹ Carlisle wrote to his wife during this period of waiting on ship board: "I slept in spite of the noise of twenty sailors walking immediately over my head; my cot was swinging backwards and forwards all night, which did not disconcert me so much as I should have expected. We breakfast at eight, dine at two,² sup at ten, and are in bed by eleven-very wholesome hours."

They had not had an audience with the king as a formal fare well as both sides seemed to feel that the questions for discussion at such a meeting might not be pleasant.³ Captain Elliot's queries in regard to the proper military honors to be paid the commissioners upon their embarkation and their treatment upon shipboard show us, however, that the whole matter was considered a very important one.⁴ Eden said they "were received with a prodigious consumption of noise and gunpowder"⁵

Their destination was New York, but they changed it to Philadelphia because on May 27 they had met a British ship which informed them that Howe and Clinton were in Philadelphia,

1. Stevens Vol.1, 101.

2. Historical Manuscripts Report XV, Carlisle Manuscripts p 334

3. Stevens Vol. 1V, 428

4. Ibid--Vol. XI, 1070; 1V, 408. 5. Ibid--Vol. 1V, 446.

and the commissioners had dispatches for them.¹ They also had had word that a French fleet had arrived at Yorktown and they wished to avoid it.²

Perhaps Carlisle was especially glad to avoid New York as his anticipations of the climate were not the most pleasant. On the voyage he had written to Lady Carlisle: "We are told we shall find New York very hot, and the gnats extremely troublesome. You know what enemies they are of mine, and however we may establish a peace in America with everything besides, with the gnats it will be perpetual war."³

On June 2, they arrived off Cape Henlopen; on June 4, they anchored in the Delaware.⁴ From there they embarked in an armed vessel and reached Philadelphia June 6.⁵ In the passage they were shot at by several riflers, but the shots fell short of the ship.⁶ They saw in the river vessels filled with miserable looking inhabitants of Philadelphia who were preparing to leave the city.⁷

This was not a very auspicious opening for the commis-

1. Stevens Vol. 1, 74.

2. Ibid----Vol. XI, 1089, 1109.

3. Historical Manuscripts Report XV, Carlisle Manuscripts p 335.

4. Stevens Vol. XI, 1089, 1109.

5. Ibid----Vol. V, 496.

6.&7. Ibid Vol. 1, 101.

sioners on the face of things, and they would have been even more discouraged if they had known all the plans of the ministry. Altho they were received cordially upon landing by Howe and Clinton, the latter in his report of their arrival to Lord Germain said he was not glad to see them.¹ Worst of all they found Philadelphia in a state of confusion and consternation because of the news that the city was to be evacuated immediately and the British forces moved to New York.

Of all this the commissioners had known nothing when they left England and they felt that it was a death blow to their plans as offers of conciliation would not have much effect following a retreat of the army.² Moreover it made them furious at the men in England who had sent the secret orders to Howe and Clinton, dated March 21, by which they were to leave their post.³ On March 12 Lord Germain had given Eden a totally different plan. From March 17-31 North never gave Eden an opportunity to see him privately; from the thirty-first until the date of sailing altho Eden saw him frequently, he said no words about the plans for the evacuation of Philadelphia, yet he knew that Eden hated to leave England because of private matters. Eden said bitterly, "They meant

1. Stevens Vol. XI, 1093.

2. Ibid----Vol. 1, 83, 74.

3. Ibid----Vol. V, 500.

to make the commission a mixture of ridicule, nullity and em-
barrassments." The commissioners had a¹ right to know the plans
which would make such a difference to them. Eden felt that
America was a fine country, but lost now by England's mistakes
and misdeeds.

In writing to Germain about the matter the commissioners
were not quite so free to express their opinions, altho John-
stone did say that he considered the movement of troops under
the circumstances "a fatal, ill-concerted and ill-advised re-
treat"-dishonorable² to the king's arms.

Eden and Carlisle agreed that a different situation might
not have helped the commission any, yet they resented the fact
that orders were sent uot from England which it was known would
work against the plan of conciliation and almost preclude the
possibility of success. Carlisle in writing to his father-in-
law, Lord Gower, said that the evacuation of Philadelphia it-
self was not so disasterous as the proposed reduction and dis-
memberment of the army, and the changing of an offensive war
into a defensive one.³ To his wife he wrote regarding the evacu-
ation of Philadelphia:⁴"We all look very grave, and perhaps we

1. Stevens Vol. V, 500.

2. Ibid----Vol. XI, 1109.

3. Ibid----Vol. V, 508.

4. Historical Manuscripts Report XV, Carlisle Manuscripts p 372.

think we look wise. I fear nobody will think so when we return. As I begin to think our business nearly over, I don't see what we have to do here."¹

The correspondence on the subject between Eden and Suffolk his superior, and between Eden and Wedderburn throws some light on the matter as viewed by the ministry. Eden wrote quite freely to both of his friends reproaching them among the rest for not informing him of the plans concerning Philadelphia. Suffolk excused himself by the illness which had prevented his attendance at the Cabinet meeting which decided upon the move. After he heard of it however, he did not feel bound to tell Eden for even in intimate friendships there is a demand for some secrecy. It was North's place to tell him if he was to be told.² Wedderburn's letter sounds more sanctimonious. He expressed polite regret for Eden's unpleasant position as one who was supposed to know the secrets of the government, but did not. Then he went on to say that the government often suffered from employing men who think of their own interests first and the government afterwards. Eden should remember how much he had been helped by the men whom he now denounced. He considered those who might

1. Historical Manuscripts Report XV, Carlisle Manuscripts p 341.
2. Stevens Vol. V, 510.

have told Eden: Suffolk was eliminated because of his illness; if Germain had disclosed the matter it would have been indiscreet North was the one who ought to have informed him. Since North did not tell, it must not have been desired that the commissioners should know before hand. A very evident and true conclusion ! He closed his sermonette by saying that tho the order seemed peculiar there must have been a good reason for it; and perhaps the commissioners would not have gotten into any trouble if they had obeyed their instructions implicitly and had gone to New York instead of to Philadelphia.

Germain responded to Eden in the same tone of injured innocence. As Eden was so much more in the confidence of the government than he himself was he was surprised that Eden had not been informed of the intended change of policy in America. If Germain himself had told anybody at all he would not have been properly fulfilling the duties of his office. The whole affair seems to have been a case of shifting the blame, as old a procedure as Adam and Eve.

The troops removed from Philadelphia were to be used for an attack upon the West Indies, and upon St. Augustine, the re-

1. Stevens Vol. V, 514.

2. Stevens Vol. V, 511.

mainder to be transported to New York as they would be too few to hold both Philadelphia and New York. The next move would be to Halifax. Surely this looked like a policy of retrenchment.¹ Germain had made an enigmatical reference to the evacuation of Philadelphia when Carlisle had last seen him, but the latter did not understand it until he reached America.

It so happened that the instructions were not strictly carried out because there were not sufficient vessels for the soldiers and all their horses and equipment, and the Loyalist inhabitants who desired to leave the city under protection. The larger part of the army therefore went by land and the ordered expeditions were sent south from New York, not from the Delaware as the original instructions required.² Washington's army pursued them, but largely because of Charles Lee's misconduct at Monmouth nothing decisive was gained by the Americans.

On June 16, the day before the troops were to leave Philadelphia, the disappointed commissioners took a private galley back to the "Trident". Adverse winds, rebels, and the intricacy of the river delayed their progress. They reached New York June 30, under the custody of Lord Howe.³

1. Stevens Vol. 1, 101.

2. Stevens Vol. 1. 101.

3. Ibid.

Poor Carlisle had enemies in America which caused him more discomfort than did the decrees of the English ministry. His worst fears in regard to the gnats were fulfilled by the experiences which he related from the Delaware river while he waited on the "Trident", June 21. "The gnats in this part of the river are as large as sparrows; I have armed myself against them by wearing trousers, which is the constant dress of this country. There is another part of dress which I have not adopted because I do not see the immediate use of it, which is, wearing a great number of feathers in my hat. In Philadelphia I believe the commissioners and the Quakers were the only people who did not embrace this fashion. 'Tis time enough for the commissioners to be feathered, when they get a little tar with them to make them stick." From New York he wrote of the excessive heat, that there was "nothing to be done but to sit quite still and wipe one's face."

1. Historical Manuscripts Report XV, Carlisle Manuscripts p 344.
 2. Ibid-----page

American Views on the
Proposed Conciliation.

Leaving the commissioners ready to begin their peaceful bombardment of the Congress and the people of America let us see how the coming of this commission was viewed by the Americans.

North's conciliatory bills were sent over to America to prepare the way for the commission, and reached here April 14, 1778. They were widely circulated and caused unfavorable comment from all those interested in the patriot cause. On April 22 a discussion of this paper telling of the proposed commission was held in Congress. They believed it to be genuine in spite of the fact that many false papers purporting to come from the British Parliament had reached them before this. One of the reasons for their greater confidence in the truth of this document was because Howe had in the past winter made feeble efforts toward a treaty. They reasoned that England believed that America wearied with war would now be glad to accede to their terms, and would cease to make preparations for further warfare when a cessation of hostilities was declared; England hoped that this plan would prevent aid from

foreign powers, make their own people more willing to fight, and cause some weak Americans to join the British side; the English feared they would need their army and navy elsewhere; and finally because the difficulties of subjugating Americans became every day greater.¹ Thus Congress summed up British reasons for sending out a peace commission at this time. They felt that the English Crown was weak and vascillating because it would now withdraw the right of taxation which it formerly declared was absolute; it was inconsistent because it would grant to the arms of America what it refused to her prayers. If Congress should treat on the basis of Britain's declared intentions on the subject of taxation they would be acknowledging the authority of Parliament in so doing. Moreover, all important acts of the commission would be invalid without the consent of Parliament, and Parliament might change its mind about these taxes and insist upon their payment at some future time. To treat under an act offering pardon would be to acknowledge that they were what England called them, rebels. Therefore Congress resolved that any man or body of men who should treat with the commissioners should be considered and dealt with as an enemy of the United States, and the only terms upon which Congress would negotiate would be the specific acknowledgment of independence, or the withdrawl of British armies and ships.

1. Journals of Continental Congress Vol. X, pages 374-380.

Washington, writing to a member of Congress in the same month, expressed his fear of the enemy's plan "to ensnare the people by specious allurements of peace". Altho the British might be sincere in their offers "a peace on the principles of dependence, however limited, after what has happened, would be to the last degree dishonorable and ruinous." He was anxious about the matter for fear the people worn by war might incline toward such a peace, and "nothing short of independence," he said, "it appears to me can possibly do". If the United States yielded to Great Britain then no other nation would help them when they came to another crisis.

Lafayette said he feared the coming of the commissioners more than ten thousand men. Congress believed that the commissioners would create divisions among the people of the states; that they might prevent the aid of France.

In Frank Moore's "Diary of the American Revolution" he says that the purpose of the prime minister in sending out the commissioners was simply to defeat the intended union with France and to recover the dependence of the colonies. The bills are "a composition of artifice and uncertainty."

1. Writings of Washington Vol. VI, pages 480-484.
2. Ibid---Vol. VI, page 483.
3. Gentleman's Magazine Vol. 48, pages 259-261.
4. Moore-Diary of the American Revolution page 39.

In May Washington wrote to a friend that North's plans were an insult to common sense; he must have known of the treaty between France and the United States when these bills were drafted. He called North "a son of thunder".¹

These American opinions would seem to bear out the assertion that three less acceptable men than the commissioners appointed could not have been sent to America, except the king, Lord North, and Lord Germain.² Whether that were true or not the commissioners seemed to have come at a very inauspicious time for the success of their mission.

1. Washington's Writings Vol. VI, page 39.
2. Marks-England and America Vol. 1, page

Proceedings of the Commissioners
in America.

The official instructions with which the commissioners were armed were elaborate and explicit, and remind one of directions given to a book agent as to what to do under all circumstances. Upon their arrival they were to communicate in a dignified manner with the American commander-in-chief, or body of Representatives, and submit their instructions from England. Being assured of safe conduct they were to set a place of meeting with American agents where they might convince them of Britain's protection in trade and commerce. The subject of independence would not be mentioned unless it was necessary, and in that case it might be admitted by the commissioners for the sake of harmony, at first. To remove all doubts as to the legality of their powers the commissioners should refer to acts of Parliament removing all apprehension concerning taxation, and specifically removing the tea duty and repealing the Massachusetts Charter Act; also promising the repeal of all acts passed since 1763. If Congress should reject these offers they ought to appeal to separate provinces, or to individuals, but not until then. If the case seems hopeless they may publish their instructions and a proclamation to the people setting

forth the wishes of the king and Parliament for peace. The question of a suspension of hostilities was quite fully dealt with in the instructions. The suffering Loyalists were to receive due consideration and relief. Several things about these instructions indicate that the dealings with America were not all perfectly open and above-board: they were to find out what were the American demands and then determine how much they had to concede; they were to declare the establishment of a voluntary contribution plan from each colony, unless they found the people opposed to such an idea, in which case they might drop it altogether; a statement of the repeal of the Declaratory Act should be left until the last of the negotiation. As the excessive paper currency of the colonies was harmful to British merchants, Great Britain kindly offered to take over all the debt from this source, exclusive of the present war debt, but they were to be repaid for their kindness from American revenues. Real reforms of the navigation and trade laws, and judicial proceedings were provided for. The question of representation of Americans in Parliament was to be referred to that body for consideration. In return for these

many concessions America would promise certain property and trade rights to Great Britain. At the conclusion of the negotiation the Declaration of Independence was to be declared illegal and not to be tolerated.¹

In pursuance of these orders the three active commissioners, Carlisle, Eden, and Johnstone, sent their first communication to Congress on June 9. Because of the unexpected action of the British army the commissioners felt the necessity for haste and consequently made their first offers broader than had been the original intention. The colonial assemblies were to be given power to transact all business, and exercise all freedom except that of total separation. Membership of colonial representatives in Parliament, or parliamentary representatives in colonial assemblies, was promised. The statement that the French offers of alliance and assistance were made only because they knew of British plans for reconciliation, and insinuations against the character of the new ally of the United States, had two unexpected results.²

When that point was reached in the reading of the document before Congress, that body stopped the reading until June 16 because of the offensive language used in regard to their ally. They only resumed the reading of it later because they thought

1. Stevens Vol. 1V, 440.

2. Stevens Volumes XI, 1104; I, 102; XI, 1177.

that it might stop the bloodshed of war.¹ Lafayette was so incensed that he sent Lord Carlisle, as head of the commission, a challenge to fight him for the insult to his country. This Carlisle wisely declined, saying that he was answerable only to his king in such a public matter.² The conclusion of the letter to Congress was not calculated to soothe ruffled feelings for it declared that if there was no satisfactory answer from Congress Great Britain would not be responsible for the cruel war which would be more bitter than before because of the unnatural alliance with the old enemy, France.

Before the arrival of the special commission in America, as we have seen, Clinton had transmitted to Congress and to Washington copies of the conciliatory bills of Parliament.³ The answer from Laurens, president of Congress, was then substantially the same as it was later: that Congress would readily attend to terms of peace consistent with the honor of independent nations, the interests of their constituents, and the sacred regard for treaties.⁴

In replying on June 17 to this direct appeal of the commissioners, Congress stated that nothing but an earnest desire to spare bloodshed could have induced them to read a ^{paper} _^

1. Marks Vol. 1, page 646.

2. Stevens X11, 1182.

3. Stevens Vol. X1, 1059.

4. Ibid ---Vol. X1, 1096.

so disrespectful to their ally and so derogatory to their own honor. However when the king shows a sincere disposition toward peace Congress will be found ready to treat. This sincere desire will be shown by the British Crown by an explicit acknowledgment of independence, or by the withdrawl of the army and navy. Thruout the negotiation Congress did not vary a particle¹ from these prerequisites to peace settlements.

The next communication from the commissioners was very suave and politic, or at least was intended to be so. If by independence Congress meant " the privilege of the people of North America to dispose of their property and to govern themselves without any reference to Great Britain beyond what is necessary to preserve that union of force in which our mutual safety and advantage consist," that has been granted by the letter of June 9. The king is anxious to dispel any uneasiness among the colonies, but because of the danger of their ancient enemy and the need for protecting the Loyalists the army must remain in America for a time. How soon it will leave after peace negotiations have begun depends upon the treatment of Loyalists and British citizens by the colonists. The commissioners desire definite information regarding treaties made with foreign countries, and² inquire by what authority Congress made these treaties.

1.Stevens Vol,Xl, 1110.

2.Stevens Vol.Xl,1119.

Instead of a direct reply to this letter Congress published in the newspapers a resolution declaring that no answer would be given to the letter of July 11 since neither of their stipulated requirements for peace was complied with.¹

Washington referred to this letter of the commissioners as puerile, and Laurens said that there was a dash of insolence in it as unnecessary as it would be unavailing.²

Meanwhile Johnstone, unfortunately for himself and the commissioners, had been busy writing secret letters to Laurens and other members of Congress trying to bribe them even with money to favor peace with Great Britain. He also employed the wife of a British officer to try her persuasive powers on one of the members, but all to no avail.³ Laurens' reply was uncompromising and to the point, that recognition of independence was the only possible basis of treatment. England might determine whether or not the commissioners should return to their country unheard.⁴ The letters were published in the Pennsylvania Gazette. Congress passed a resolution that it considered these letters as attempts to corrupt its integrity, and consequently it would have no manner of correspondence with Johnstone.⁵

1. Stevens Vol. XI, 1171.
2. Writings of Washington Vol. VII, page 119.
3. Stevens Vol. XI, 1171.
4. Stevens Vol. I, 75.
5. Ibid ---Vol. XI, 1171.

Johnstone replied that he considered himself distinguished by the action of Congress. He thinks Congress will retract its harsh words and be glad to treat later for Congress is deluded. His real friends in America did and still do wish for the carrying into effect of the plans of the commission. Because his only purpose in coming to America was to promote reconciliation and peace, he will withdraw from the commission in order to further those purposes. In conclusion he said that he did not care to be the friend of a body which for policy has made al-
¹liance with an ancient enemy.

The spirit of this letter was excellently expressed by Washington who said, "He tries to convince you that he is not at all hurt by, or offended at, the interdiction of Congress, and that he is not in a passion; while he exhibits abundant proof that he is cut to the quick and biting his fingers in an agony of passion."
²

Neither did Johnstone's letter gain him friends in England if we may judge by Wedderburn's report on the subject to Eden. He wrote, "Johnstone's letter to Laurens when I first saw it turned me quite sick. You cannot imagine how much it offends all ranks of people. The national pride it is true is humbled, but we can ill bear to have it proclaimed by those
³who are intrusted to maintain its honor."

1. Stevens Vol. XI, 1171.

2. Writings of Washington Vol. VII, page 194.

3. Stevens Vol. V, 517.

The rest of the commissioners could hardly do otherwise than defend their colleague tho they stated that they knew nothing of his private correspondence. They made another appeal to Congress against the French alliance, and its unnatural connection with a power which had always been the enemy of civil and religious liberty; the acceptance of Great Britain's offers would bring the greatest possible peace and happiness. Again they made the charge that the French treaties were decided upon after France learned of Britain's plans; the British conciliatory propositions were given to Parliament in November 1777, and the French preliminary treaty was dated December 16.¹ To be sure both nations were as Gibbon said, "fairly running a race for the favor of America", yet France did not stop and wait for England to catch up with her so she arrived first.

So far as Johnstone was concerned he was of no further use to the commission except in minor matters for he could have no dealings with Congress or any of the officials. In September he returned to England where he spent his time justifying the conduct of the commissioners and saying abusive things about the Howe brothers whom he did not like.²

1. Stevens Vol. XI, 1133, 1171.
2. Stevens Vol. V, 562, 541.

Strange to say he blamed the loss of America on their incapacity, and probably thought he would have done much better.

The two principal commissioners left in America, Eden and Carlisle, went on with their work by means of appeals to individuals and to the inhabitants in general. They worked along lines suggested to Eden by the Reverend John Vardill, a British divine, before he left England. To secure the respect of the people in general they must practice gravity in deportment, not conviviality; cultivate religious principles and attend public worship. Among those who may help them are a few Loyalists; most of them are too much controlled by passion and prejudice to give correct information, and too obnoxious to the Rebels to aid in conciliating them. Some are vain and can be flattered; the shallow ones, however, have no influence. If the right arguments are used they might gain the aid of the powerful Livingstone family in New York, and of John Jay who had married into that family. The men who left the Rebel cause when the result became hazardous could give information, but they are cool and unprincipled, and detested by the people. The commissioners should make it to the interest of Congress and the army to close with them because these are the controlling influences in the country. Since the commissioners had

already killed their influence with Congress by their first letters, there was no recourse but to turn to other methods.

A good many appeals to them for aid were made by suffering Tories and men whose trade had been cut off by the war. As the commissioners were living in New York it is natural that they should have been particularly interested in helping their friends there. The New York merchants greeted the coming of the commissioners with pleasure because they hoped through them that trade of loyal subjects might be re-established and the embargo removed. ¹ Nearly a month after the first application from the merchants the commissioners issued a proclamation by which the Prohibitory Act was suspended in New York in regard to certain commodities and certain places. Goods formerly allowed to go to Great Britain, Ireland, Newfoundland, Halifax, Quebec, Rhode Island, East and West Florida, and the British West Indies might be sent now, with the exception of military and naval stores. ² The capture of prizes was authorized. As the provision expired in three months the traders were soon asking for an extension of the period, and also the importation of stores needed by the army and the navy. ³ The request was granted and the time was extended until June 1, 1779, when it was again renewed for six months. Newport, Rhode Island was also included in the trade privilege. ⁴ The measures seem to

1. Stevens Vol. XI, 1136.
2. Stevens Vol. V, 527.
3. Ibid ---Vol. XI, 1212.
4. Ibid-----Vol. XI, 1287.

have been very beneficial to trade from the standpoint of the British as well as of the New Yorkers.¹

The Loyalists of New York were very anxious also for the re-establishment of a civil government. The commissioners at first felt that the difficulties in the way were too many, the army of General Clinton was not strong enough to protect the large population; they had doubts also about their own powers² being sufficient for the institution of such a government. By the next April, however, when they were back in England Eden could write, "The expediency of a civil council for the general affairs of the colonies to be resident at New York grows every hour more obvious and more necessary."³

Across the Atlantic London and Glasgow merchants were just as anxious for a renewal of trade, especially from the southern tobacco plantations. In March 1779 the Prohibitory Act was annuled in the cases of Georgia and South Carolina as these colonies were declared to be at His Majesty's Peace, so there was chance for some trade for British merchants.⁴

The commissioners, in accordance with their instructions appointed Lieutenant Colonel Archibald Campbell as governor

1. Stevens Vol. X11, 1219.

2. Ibid---Vol. X11, 1217.

3. Ibid---Vol. X11, 1282.

4. Ibid---Vol. X11, 1273, 1274, 1275.

and commander-in-chief in the colony of Georgia,¹ and later with the king's special permission, declared the colony to² be at peace, it having been conquered by the British.

From individual Loyalists who had lost property, or who were imprisoned by the American Congress on a treason charge came despairing cries for help. To some petitioners who desired to know what was the legal status of those exiled from their homes, to the various colonial governments,³ the commissioners made rather an evasive reply.

Perhaps the most important matter taken up by them other than direct peace negotiations was the release of Burgoyne's army, held at Boston by Congress on a technicality⁴ despite the terms of the Saratoga Convention. The commissioners offered to ratify the Convention in the king's name, but Congress would not trust them and kept the troops altho Burgoyne went back to England.⁵ The original agreement was that the troops might return to England provided that they were not again used in the present war in America. Some of the soldiers escaped to England later, but some never did return. Washington disapproved of the action of Congress.

1. Stevens Vol. X11, 1202.
2. Ibid---Vol. X11, 1272.
3. Ibid---Vol. X1, 1130.
4. Ibid---Vol. X1, 1171, 1125.
5. Ibid---Vol. X1, 1155, 1171.

As early as June 10, Carlisle had written to his friend ¹ George Selwyn in England, "Things go ill and will not go better!" To his wife on July 1 he wrote, "The common people hate us in their hearts, notwithstanding all that is said of their secret attachment to the mother country." ² They had indeed had discouragements from the beginning when the evacuation of Philadelphia took place. The influence of the French alliance which they combated most vigorously was none the less a very great hindrance to them. On July 11, Gerard, the French ambassador to the United States, had arrived and with him Silas Deane who had been an American agent in Paris. They were received with great honors and much joy. The commissioners wrote to Germain, July 19 that the arrival and presence of the French squadron was such a disturbing element that they could not foretell the future. ³ In his private correspondence Carlisle had expressed himself even more strongly for he said, "The arrival of the fleet makes every hope of success in our business ridiculous." ⁴

The rejection of terms by Congress left the commissioners no hope except on the following grounds: an extension of the British military power; an appeal to the people at large;

1. Jesse-Selwyn and His Contemporaries Vol. 111, page 283.

2. Marks Vol; 1, page 659.

3. Stevens Vol; XI, 1120.

4. Historical Manuscripts Report XV, Carlisle Manuscripts, p 356.

negotiation with separate bodies of men, and individuals; the last two depending upon the first. Congress would not have answered their communications so indecently, they said, and would not have been so elated if it had not been for the French treaty and the evacuation of Philadelphia which left the whole coast of America open to foreign supplies, and a free entrance for prizes. The commissioners insisted still that they believed the alliance with France was disagreeable to a great number of people, and that of Great Britain highly acceptable, yet there was no hope for Britain so long as Washington held the field and awed the people.

There was really a good deal of truth in the statement that many people disliked the French alliance if we may judge from the remarks of some American Tories. They distrusted France as a Catholic power, and they felt that Congress had acted arbitrarily in not asking the consent of the people in making the treaty, and also in declaring its refusal to treat with Great Britain. New York's sympathies were most largely with the British, so much so that they declared it was not possible for the Americans to win the war for independence.

1. Stevens Vol. XI, 1116.

2. Stevens Vol. XI, 1115.

3. Moore-- Diary of American Revolution Vol. 11, page 46.

4. Ibid ---Vol. 11, pages 60-62.

Reports from England show that there was little belief there in the success of the commission. In June the Bishop of Bangor wrote to Eden, "I meet with people now and then, who are not without hope you may do something, but the number is small." In July he said that the hopes for the success of the commission had been sinking, yet no one seemed to blame the men in charge.

A letter to Eden from another of his friends told him that there was dissatisfaction in England over the work of the commissioners. Some people thought too that Eden had written unwisely to Germain about the evacuation of Philadelphia, altho they did not blame ^{him} for being offended at the treatment he had received. Others thought that the commissioners had exceeded their authority. In Parliament Wilkes said that the commissioners were sent to do only three things: bring about a cessation of hostilities; restore free intercourse and affection; and extend trade relations. They had taken up other matters without authorization. They had promised to assume American debts; that no military force should be kept in America without the consent of Congress; that Americans should have seats in Parliament.

This exceeding of their powers was one of the chief causes of disagreement with Lord George Germain. There was truth in the

1. Stevens Vol. V, 494, 506.

2. Gentleman's Magazine Vol. 49, page 8.

accusation and yet the instructions gave them considerable liberty to use their discretion. Germain wrote them that in further negotiations they should make no concessions not authorized by their instructions and by Parliament.¹ Carlisle, however, gave some good reasons for the actions of his fellow commissioners and himself. They had told the most important concessions at the beginning because of the alarm occasioned by the coming of the French fleet and the necessity of showing the advantages of alliance with Great Britain over France; a retreating army would make treating less practicable later; it was advisable to show the people the good terms which their leaders had refused; from the great dependence of the people upon the assistance of France they would not listen to terms less beneficial than they demanded before the French treaty was proposed; the consequences of a French treaty would be so disastrous² that they should take all means possible to counteract it.³ The time was one of general confusion and the commissioners had acted for the best as they saw it, they were ready to stand the consequences.

After all certain advantages would still remain to Great

1. Stevens Vol. XI, 1124.

2. Stevens Vol. I, 76.

3. Ibid ---Vol. I, 77.

Britain even if great concessions were made to America. The colonies would still acknowledge the English king, and they could not make any treaty or alliance hostile to Great Britain; the Crown would still appoint the governors and army officers; the interests of the two countries would be so intimately connected that the Americans could still consider England as home; the arrangement in regard to the disposal of the paper currency would put the colonies in Great Britain's debt. On the other hand if England lost America it would mean the loss of the West Indies as well as a part of the continent, and British world influence would diminish instead of widen.¹

The commissioners complained to Germain in September that the cause of Great Britain had declined because of the plan to remove some of the troops to the West Indies which had prevented an active campaign on the continent and held up vessels in the port of New York for four months. If the troops in America are to be weakened instead of strengthened the commissioners might as well return to England. Loyalists in the colonies who had so far avoided taking the oath of allegiance to the new government would make their peace with Congress and the whole of America would become a dependency of France. The determination of the Congress in regard to the treaty with France has already put an

1. Stevens Vol. 1, 79.

end to any advances to that body on the part of the commission-
¹
 ers.

Lord Germain prophecied that the French fleet was a small
 obstruction which Howe would remove and then Congress would
 gladly turn to²the British offers..Unfortunately for the English
 this happy prophecy did not come true.

During the summer of 1778 a British officer delivered to
 the people of America an address concerning the action of Cong-
 ress in regard to the Conciliatory Bills. The time was, he
 mournfully said, when they were the happiest people on earth,
 but they renounced all peace and prosperity with allegiance to
 Great Britain. The people have been misled and prejudiced with-
 out cause against Great Britain who did not oppress them. The
 interests of the people were sacrificed to the ambition of the
 leaders, who knowing that British rule would end their power,
 opposed it. The continuance of the war is the result of the
 action of this selfish Congress which did not permit the people
 to deliberate, but decided for them against the Mother Country.
 England is not desiring peace now because she despairs of con-
 quest, but because she has the interests of the people at heart.
 The petitions which had been sent by the colonies to the king
 in the early history of the conflict were rejected because they

1. Stevens Vol. Xl, 1144.
 2. Stevens Vol. Xl, 1142.

were not properly worded to make them admissible, but the essential things petitioned for then have repeatedly been offered to the colonies. The only favorable issue¹ of the war will be reconciliation.

As the time passed the commissioners began to show more discouragement even in official correspondence. They do not see how England can persevere much longer in unsuccessful exertions. The plan to try to take the West Indies will be very disastrous for America. Even if they yielded the "ungrateful claim of independence" America would hardly make a separate peace from France. In spite of the hopeless outlook the commissioners resolved to proceed with their labors, but if nothing should arouse definite hopes of success before the coming of winter, they will return to England. Previous to their going they will frame the notifications of their intentions and send copies to Congress, to the provincial conventions, and to the people. They will endeavor to show² that their departure is not due to despondency.

In pursuance of this plan on October 3, Clinton, Carlisle, and Eden issued a Manifesto to members of Congress, of the General Assemblies, and to all other free inhabitants. In the introduction they stated that they would not persist in holding out

1. Stevens Vol. XI, 1112.

2. Stevens Vol. XI, 1160.

gifts to have them ungratefully treated, but they would return home. First, however, they are making a last attempt to give a clear statement of their case. The appeal is made to different bodies, or classes of people. To Congress they say, "We are ready to secure peace with exemption from taxation by Parliament, but altho you are not authorized by your constitution to reject our offers without referring them to the colonial assemblies, you have done so. Upon you will fall the blame for the future miseries of the war."

To the colonial assemblies they offer special support for loyalty.

To all free inhabitants comes the encouragement that all grievances which caused the war have been removed.

The religious leaders are reminded that France has always been opposed to religious toleration, while Great Britain has taken an opposite course.

The farmers can appreciate the blessings of peace of which their leaders are depriving them.

To those who feel that separation from Great Britain would bring a better government the commissioners threaten a change in the mode of warfare which will be unpleasant, to say the least. England can have no desire to prevent a devastation of the country which is an ally of France, therefore they will

make it of as little value as possible to their enemy. There will be no acknowledgment of independence as that step would be calamitous to the colonies, and disgraceful and disastrous to Great Britain. In the beginning the colonies asked for a redress of grievances, why should they ask for more now?

To all the inhabitants a pardon is offered for any treasonable offense, and special benefits and privileges are held out to those who will withdraw from either a civil or a military office in the colonies; individual colonies desiring peace might receive their former government free from taxation.

The proclamation was to go into effect forty days after the date of its promulgation.¹

Altho this proclamation sounded fierce and grandiloquent Carlisle's private correspondence show that actually the commissioners had little hope of its doing any good to their cause, it was a last dying speech. When this final appeal was only contemplated Carlisle wrote to his father-in-law, Lord Gower, "I see very little good likely to arise from the address to the people!"² His letters to his wife expressed the same sentiments.

On October 23 his private letter is a swans song untouched by the bitterness toward the colonies which is portrayed in the public document. He likes the beauties of the country, tho

1. Stevens Vol. X1, 1172.

2. Stevens Vol. V, 503.

not the climate. "Everything is upon a great scale on this continent," he writes. "We have nothing on a great scale with us but our blunders, our misconduct, our ruin, our losses, our disgraces and misfortunes that will mark the reign of a prince who deserves better treatment and kinder fortunes."¹

In England the Manifesto was severely criticized for its justification of barbarous warfare. Besides, it would invite reprisals on English coast towns by American ships. In the debate in Parliament on the question the court party defended it as "a sober, sensible, well-meant address"² and told stories of American cruelties in the war. By an alliance with France America had forfeited all right to clemency; she should have real war now. Burke in the opposition, declared that burning and pillage were inexcusable, and exceeded the rights of war between civilized nations. Lord North, who was somewhat conciliatory by nature, replied that the proclamation did not mean so much as that, but Johnstone who was present said that it meant a "war of desolation" but he heartily approved and wished for even worse things to happen to Congress. Sir William Howe, who knew America better than Johnstone did and was withal a more kindly character, deplored the proclamation; he said the war was hopeless anyhow.²

1. Jesse-George Selwyn and His Contemporaries Vol. 111, pp 338-41
 2. Gentleman's Magazine Vol. 49, page 163 ff.
 Marks Vol. 2, pages 685-686.
 Trevelyn, pages 206-207.

In the House of Lords, Rockingham was the spokesman for humanity, declaring that the proclamation was "replete with perfidy, cunning and barbarity". Suffolk was astonished that the Manifesto should be so interpreted. It only meant to show the Americans the blessings they were about to forego, and how leniently they had been treated heretofore. The Bishop of Peterborough said that if the Lords did not censure the proclamation it would be an indelible disgrace to the name of Britain. Some others referred to it as an instrument of horror.¹

The issuance of this proclamation did not help the commissioners nor the ministry in England, neither was it of any more use to them in America.

Washington wrote to the president of Congress that the purpose of the Manifesto might be just to terrorize the people. In any event he would suppress all copies which came to his hand.²

In the first reply that Congress made to the declaration it recalled the fact that America went into the war reluctantly, and that vain petitions for a redress of grievances were sent to the king and to Parliament. The cruelty of the English in warfare, to prisoners, and in the use of the Indians is mentioned. It urges against dependence upon such a perfidious nation,

1. Gentleman's Magazine Vol. 49, page 163 ff.

Marks Vol. 11, pages 685-686.

Trevelyn pages 206-207.

2. Writings of Washington Vol. VII, page 223.

even tho it is offering terms.¹ The terrible Wyoming Massacre in July in which Tories, British, and Indians combined to wipe out a fruitful valley in the most barbarous manner, had helped to embitter the conflict.² Congress ordered that all persons sent out with the Manifesto were to be taken into custody. The Manifesto should be printed in the official gazettes so that all the people might know the designs of the commissioners.³

On October 30 Congress issued a counter manifesto in which there was a recapitulation of statements formerly made as to the reasons for their declaring independence, and their treatment by England, concluding with the declaration that if Great Britain presumes to execute her threats, or persists in barbarity they will retaliate severely.⁴ The British took exception to the statements made about them and declared that they were untrue.

The Manifesto of the commissioners was to be sent to General Washington, to Laurens, president of Congress, to the delegates of each colony in Congress, and to the separate colonies themselves there were to be seven sets sent: six printed copies and one elaborate one written on vellum. Both British and American officers were to have extra copies for occasional distribution later on. These copies were printed in both the German and

1. Gentleman's Magazine Vol. 48, pages 414-417.

2. Marks Vol. 1, page 651; Moore's Diary page 71.

3. Journals of Continental Congress Vol. XI, 1015.

4. Stevens Vol. XI, 1200; Journals of Congress Vol. XI, 1080-82.

the English languages, German copies being especially prepared for the central provinces. The officers who were to deliver the Manifesto to the various colonies were sent on board vessels with flags of truce.¹

John Hay who was dispatched with copies to Virginia and Maryland had a troublesome time. Upon his arrival in Hampton harbor he was put in charge of an American officer from Ft. Henry. He was allowed to present his papers, but not to leave them and by order of the governor of Virginia was requested to depart immediately as that state could hold no correspondence with the enemy. Hay was accordingly conducted out of the harbor by an armed vessel and told that should he or any other person make a second attempt to circulate the Manifesto he would be taken into custody by the state as an enemy.²

The copies sent to Pennsylvania and Delaware were lost in a shipwreck so Dr. Adam Ferguson, secretary to the commissioners, sent duplicates to Laurens. The men who escaped the shipwreck were detained as prisoners, and all remonstrances to Congress were unavailing.³

In the Jerseys the Manifesto was published with scurrilous remarks by the governor. In Connecticut it was published with-

1. Stevens Vol. X1, 1059; X11, 1218.

2. Ibid ----Vol. X11, 1198.

3. Ibid-----Vol. X11, 1215.

out comment. There was no report of the packets sent to Massachusetts, Bay, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, New York, the Carolinas, or Georgia.

The fate of the Manifesto was undoubtedly largely due to a resolution passed by Congress on October 16, which declared that persons who delivered seditious papers intended to stir up dissensions and animosity contrary to the law of nations were not entitled to protection from a flag of truce while engaged in such nefarious practices, and should therefore be taken into custody and their messages should be published in the newspapers of the United States for the information of all.¹

As the commissioners had anticipated the failure of this last attempt they were probably not greatly disappointed over the results. Eden wrote Wedderburn on October 16 that altho there is feeling among the people against their leaders he sees very little hope of the proclamation's having immediate effects of any importance.² Yet as "hope springs eternal in the human breast" they could write to Germain a month later that they still believed many people viewed their offers favorably. Some people believed these measures were preliminary to a total evacuation by Great Britain, and such a belief was heightened by the departure of three large detachments of troops from New York.³

1. Stevens Vol. XI, 1186.

2. Ibid---Vol. V, 538.

3. Ibid---Vol. XI, 1215.

Attitude of the Loyalists
in America.

The commissioners came nearer to success than perhaps they thought in their sober moments, for in the American army such men as Gates and Charles Lee favored negotiation with England, and a large number of people would have welcomed it as a relief from war, but Congress stood firm on the ground of no negotiation except on acknowledgment of independence or the removal of troops.¹ The commissioners themselves realized that if Congress had accepted their terms and agreed to treat it would have been an acknowledgment of their dependence upon the king.² Moreover if the United States was true to her alliance with France which she had signed May 4, 1778, she could not treat with Britain on any other basis than that of independence.

Diametrically opposite views in America are shown by the following statements of Patriots and Tories. A Patriot said of the commissioners: "These gentlemen seem to consider their master's commission as a sort of pass to go a begging with; for if anything can justly be called begging this last performance of theirs deserves that name-----But these gentlemen have another business in hand besides begging, and that is lying--" The Rivington Royal Gazette, a Tory paper, published this: "The con-

1. Lecky page 402.

2. Stevens Vol. 1, 109.

duct of the British Commissioners since their arrival on this continent has been such as deserves the highest encomiums from every friend of truth, virtue, and humanity." ¹

The procedure in questioning the power of Congress to make treaties had a most subtle bearing on the whole relation between France and America. It was an attempt to divide the colonies, none too firmly united, and it caused considerable anxiety in France because they did not know with whom they were to deal, where the sovereignty really resided. They feared that America discouraged would accept English terms. Moreover the relations between France and America over here were not untroubled. The jealousy between American and foreign officers in the army was a source of distress to Washington and caused him once to express the wish there was not a single foreign officer in the army except Lafayette. The fact that France was the strongest Catholic state of the time made the alliance at times a bitter pill to New England Puritans. The conduct of Count D'Estaing, the French naval commander who arrived in American waters with a fleet in July, did not in any way improve the feeling of the Americans for their French supporters. If D'Estaing instead of retiring to Boston had vigorously prosecuted the attack upon Rhode Island as he was

1. Moore--Diary Vol. 11, pages 97-100.

urged to do, the British would have been dislodged from Rhode Island and the war might have ended sooner. Washington was much disappointed in the action of the French officer, but others were so indignant that he had to use tact to prevent an outbreak.

In spite of the action of Congress and of Washington's efforts to avoid intercourse between the army and the enemy commission¹ there was much discussion of the question. The number of Loyalists seems to have increased as a result of the encouragement given them by the English. Because of the ignorance and uncertainty in the army concerning the state of the proceedings between the commissioners and Congress the plans for campaigns were sometimes unsettled. Even in 1781 the states of Georgia, Maryland, and the Carolinas were predominantly Loyalist and were held only by the vigorous action of Whig leaders in which terrorism played a part, and the military maneuvers of men like Green, Marion, and Sumter.² The tragically underfed, underclothed condition of the American armies all thru the war was another factor which caused many ardently to desire a cessation of hostilities.

1. Writings of Washington Vol. VII, page 68.

2. Lecky--page 440.

Return of the Commissioners.

Altho the commissioners were appointed to serve for a year, soon after their arrival in America they began to consider returning to England. In July Carlisle had written to Gower that he desired permission to return home, but he wanted to stay as long as there was a hope of doing any good. They would remain, not to negotiate, but to supplicate. Carlisle had not the courage to cut the ties of dependence between the two countries, and besides he was strongly opposed to the idea of giving the colonies independence; if that were considered they would have to give some one else his position.¹

By August Carlisle felt that lingering in America would be attended with two bad consequences. First,- it would give England false hopes and a false sense of security, and would delay plans necessary to be taken in case the commission failed. Second,- it would be a triumph to Congress to have them waiting ready to jump at its call. Cutting matters short and issuing a declaration of reasons for departure at a certain time might arouse the people from their indifference. Besides all these reasons, remaining uselessly would only make them a pecuniary charge upon the public²

Wedderburn, however, did not favor an early return of the commissioners." Public commissions," he said, "are'nt to be held

1. Stevens Vol. V, 503.

2. Stevens Vol. 1, 89.

during the pleasure of those who execute them." They should not leave their post unless it was their firm conviction that it was best for the public service for negotiations to cease. Their leaving would be imputed to despair or unsteadiness. Circumstances might change and they ought to be on hands to take advantage of such an opportunity. Their stay might not affect America, but their return might affect Europe.¹

When after the issuance of the Manifesto there was no change in conditions and Congress still had power over the people, Carlisle and Eden decided to return to England in spite of the fact that they had had no recent dispatches from Lord Germain. They felt the lack of the king's approval of their labors and that they had had an unsuccessful, embarrassing, and distressing task.²

As a friendly farewell to them some Loyalists in New York sent the commissioners an address upon November 25, in which they expressed thanks for the aid which had been given them and a desire that still greater privileges might be shown to them. They wished the king to know that he had many loyal subjects in America, a large number of whom were in prison for that loyalty.³

1. Stevens Vol. V, 517.
 2. Ibid----Vol. X11, 1213.
 3. Ibid----Vol. X11, 1226.

On November 27 the two commissioners, Eden and Carlisle, set sail for England in the "Roebuck", a ship of war. On quitting New York they were offered public honors and ceremonies by civil, military, and naval departments in the city, but while they appreciated the honor shown they preferred to depart without display, perhaps feeling that their lack of success in America did not entitle them to a great show.¹ They had the mortification of not having heard from England since the first of August, and they were obliged to draw upon the Secretary of the Treasury for 300 pounds for the expenses of the voyage.²

After an uneventful sail they landed at Plymouth, December 20, and proceeded to London without delay.

The reception of the commissioners by the king and the ministry does not seem to have been very warm. Eden expressed some of his grievances in a letter to Lord North written February 1, 1779. The commission, he said, had not been a total failure. It had brought 1,000,000 pounds sterling in British property to the country; it had made plans for the better supply of the garrisons in America; it had encouraged the commander-in-chief to hold positions which he would otherwise have abandoned; it published a declaration which showed the

1. Stevens Vol. XI, 1227.

2. Stevens Vol. XI, 1059.

world British honor, encouraged the loyal, reclaimed the wavering, and distressed the rebellious; it had aided in the establishing of peace in the southern colonies. Yet in spite of these noble efforts and accomplishments Eden claims that the American office seems to wish the commissioners to continue unnoticed. He has no selfish object in view, nevertheless he is hurt for he had accepted a difficult and delicate position because it was necessary for some one who knew public matters familiarly to go; he did not accept until others had refused. It was a hazardous undertaking. He broke up his home to go and gave up the office which he had held for six years and to which he could not now return. Besides, the appointment for such a short time had not made the commissioners wealthy. He states that he will now return to private life, as a martyr¹ to the cause of his country presumably.

However, Eden seemed to have forgotten his humble statement a few days later for he informed North that he and Carlisle would bring up in the House of Commons the question of the instructions for removing the troops from Philadelphia. They wanted the papers so that they might see who was responsible for the act.² North replied that if this paper was called for many others also would have to be made public,---

1. Stevens Vol. V, 554.

2. Stevens Vol. V, 555.

in fact all the correspondence with the commissioners. They would thus lose all hope of reconciliation with America for jealousies and animosities would be aroused. If Eden is loyal¹ to his country he will not wish this to happen.

Eden replied that attachment to government had produced him nothing. He will choose one of three lines for his future conduct: he may continue in an office which is much lower than the one he had given up on going to America, only to receive neglect and disregard on his return; if the government really needs strengthening he will help it, but he will expect a return for his services; he may take the question of their treatment before the public and that might lead to unpleasant consequences.²

To Wedderburn a short time afterwards Eden reported a friendly but an embarrassed interview with Lord North. They discussed Howe and the general situation of Edens friends, but North did not become definite. He asked Eden what he wanted done for himself, but Eden declined to discuss his own affairs until conditions were made better for others. After they separated he wrote a note to the minister telling him

1. Stevens Vol. V, 556.

2. Ibid ----Vol. V, 557.

that unless ^{matter} change a great deal in three days he cannot continue in the line he wishes. He is going to Greenwich for a few days for a change of air. " I am vexed to the heart," he writes, over his own ill-treatment and Wedderburn's misfortunes.¹

Again we find him a suppliant in spite of his protestation that he wanted nothing for himself. He tells North that the commissioners havenot been given enough honors so that they will appear well before the House of Commons and the nation; not solely for his own gratification does he desire this honor, but as a representative of the government. He would like a position in the royal household for Mrs. Eden.²

King George's opinion of Eden evidently had not improved since Eden went to America for he said that North must now have his eyes fully opened to Eden's character. He could not see any reason for the creation of a nominal office for Eden; he would rather put a pension in the hands of trustees for the sole use of Mrs. Eden.^{3 4}

Not long after this, however, Eden was rewarded. He went to Ireland in 1780 as chief secretary to his friend the Earl of Carlisle who had been made lord lieutenant of that country. He was elected a member of the Irish Parliament, but went into

1. Stevens Vol. V, 558.

2. Ibid----Vol. V, 559

3. Donne--King George to Lord North . Letters 540 and 547.

4. Stevens Vol. Xll, 1262.

English politics again in the ministry of the younger Pitt. He performed with success special missions in France, Spain, and Holland, and even made a second trip to America in 1789 to negotiate a commercial treaty with the United States. First created an Irish peer he was made a member of the British nobility as Lord Auckland in 1785.¹

Carlisle too held offices of trust and honor tho he was not so prominent in political life as was Eden. Before his position in Ireland he took the place of Germain as president of the Board of Trade. As an Irish administrator he worked for the good of the Irish people and won their respect. His chief public duties in England were those of a member of the House of Lords.²

Poor Sir Henry Clinton left over in America seems not to have had the good fortune which befell his fellow commissioners for he complains to Eden of neglect and wonders why his pay as a commissioner does not reach him.³ Clinton's relations with Cornwallis were not pleasant so he resigned his command in 1781 and returned to England. Here he was a member of Parliament for a time, and just before his death he held the post of governor of Gibraltar.⁴

1. Dictionary of National Biography.

2. Ibid.

3. Stevens Vol. XII, 1258.

4. Dictionary of National Biography.

George Johnstone was not prominent in politics altho he was in Parliament, perhaps because he was too hot-headed to agree with any one very long. He filled the position of naval commander with very indifferent success.¹

1. Dictionary of National Biography.

Conclusion.

The commission, then, which the British ministry, itself not confident of success, had sent out to America with the hope of ending the war of which everyone was tired, failed absolutely in its purpose. The men, with the possible exception of Johnstone, did the best they could with their instructions and their own personal prejudices against independence. Moreover the force of circumstances was against them as we have seen: the signing of the treaty between France and the United States, and the evacuation of Philadelphia by the British troops at the outset of their labors, undoubtedly handicapped them greatly. The commission failed first of all because George III and his supporters did not comprehend the spirit of the Americans and the point of the whole struggle; because they failed to read the signs of the times and to see that conditions had changed so much in the years from 1775-1778, that the things which would have completely satisfied the colonies in 1775 could not be sufficient for them after the Declaration of Independence had been issued; and lastly because they waited too long and let France enter into the contest, very much strengthening America's position and weakening that of England.

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