

Letters of Col. Matthias Slough to Robert Morris.

By HON. CHAS. I. LANDIS.

I have several times presented before you short sketches of the life of Col. Matthias Slough; but, in doing so, I have confined myself to his birth and death and a few public incidents of his life. His remains are interred in St. James' Cemetery, in this city. He was one of the most prominent citizens of the old town prior to and covering the War of the Revolution, and his intimate relations, not only with his fellow citizens, but with distinguished men and officials residing in the Commonwealth, would, it seems to me, throw a vivid light upon the various transactions of those far-off times. Whether any one is possessed of such documents, I cannot say; but, some time ago, I purchased at a public sale in Philadelphia, ten of his letters, written during the year 1778. They are all directed to Robert Morris, the patriot-financier. They were all written in Lancaster, and five of them were directed to Robert Morris, at Manheim, and five to him at Philadelphia.

It may not be generally known that Robert Morris, at that time, lived in the town of Manheim: Baron Henry William Stiegel, so known, had built a great house, called "The Castle," for his own use. When the British approached Philadelphia, the Morris family took all they valued, most of their household effects, both in their city and country houses, and conveyed them in a caravan of covered wagons to Lancaster, and thence to what had been the Stiegel home. They remained there until Philadelphia was evacuated by the British in 1778.

Mrs. Morris, writing to her mother, Mrs. Thomas White, from Philadelphia, on April 14, 1777, said:

"We are preparing for another flight, in packing up our furniture and removing them to a new purchase Mr. Morris has made 10 miles from Lancaster, no other than the famous house that belonged to Stedman and Stiegel at the Iron Works, where you know I spent six weeks; so am perfectly well acquainted with the goodness of the house and the situation. The reason Mr. Morris made this purchase, he looks upon the other not secure if they come by water. I think myself very lucky in having this asylum, it being but eight miles, fine road, from Lancaster, where I expect Mr. Morris will be if he quits this, besides many of my friends and acquaintances. So I will now solicit the pleasure of your company at this once famous place, instead of Mennet, where perhaps we may yet trace some vestiges of the late owner's folly and may prove a useful lesson to his successors."

When Baron Stiegel became embarrassed, his property was sold by the Sheriff and purchased by Michael Diffenderfer. The deed from John Ferree, Esq., High Sheriff, bears date March 30, 1775, and is recorded in Record Book Q, p. 247. The property was described as all those following four lots

or pieces of ground, situated, lying and being in the Town of Manheim, in the County of Lancaster, aforesaid. The first of said lots was marked on the general plan of the said town as No. 278, and contained in front on Prussian Street 57 feet and in depth to Wolf Street 257 feet. Another of said lots was marked on the general plan of said town as No. 279, and contained in front on Prussian Street 57 feet, and in depth to Wolf Street 257 feet. A third lot was marked on said plan as No. 280, and contained in front on Prussian Street 57 feet, and in depth to Wolf Street 257 feet. The fourth of said lots was known as No. 281, and contained in front on Prussian Street 57 feet, and in depth to Wolf Street 257 feet. The said four lots were granted on April 14, 1777, by Michael Diffenderfer to William Baussman, his heirs and assigns.

There was another lot of ground, which Charles Stedman and Ann, his wife, Alexander Stedman and Elizabeth, his wife, and Henry William Stiegel and Elizabeth, his wife, by their indenture dated October 1, 1762, granted and confirmed unto Adam Diffenderfer, his heirs and assigns, for ever, and which the said Adam Diffenderfer and Margaret, his wife, by deed poll endorsed on the back of the said indenture, dated March 31, 1777, granted unto William Baussman, his heirs and assigns. On April 25, 1777, William Baussman and Catharine, his wife, conveyed all of the above mentioned tracts unto Robert Morris, Merchant, of the City of Philadelphia.

What was then called Prussian Street has since been named Main Street. I am informed that beyond doubt the Stiegel Mansion was located on the above described lots. The south brick wall of the second story of what is now a three-story brick building on the first mentioned lot is the original south wall of the Stiegel house. This building has for many years been known as the Henry Arndt Store. About eight years ago, the title to it passed to H. D. Leman, and recently Mr. Leman conveyed it to Willis Rettew. Next on the north is now a two-story brick residence, owned and occupied by Clayton S. Shelly, and adjoining these premises on the north is a three-story brick building, owned by T. S. Beck & Son as a furniture and undertaking establishment. Still further to the north is the drug store of Charles A. Ensminger. All of these buildings are on the Stiegel lots.

The Stiegel Glass Factory was on the northwest corner of Charlotte and Stiegel Streets. On this ground is now erected a two-story brick dwelling house, formerly owned and occupied by Philip F. Ruhl, deceased, but lately sold to Benjamin Bomberger. The Baron's office stood on the northwest corner of Charlotte and West High Streets. It was a one-story building, which for many years was occupied by Jonas White as a carpenter shop. There, however, was here erected by the late Clayton Gibble a two and a-half story mansion, now owned by J. H. Flacker, which is considered one of the finest houses in the town.

The following are transcripts of the Slough letters:

Dear Sir:—

I have now the Pleasure of inclosing you a resolve of Council respecting the enlargement of our Friend, John Brown, together with the Bond which he and his Surety are to sign.

If it should be inconvenient for you to come to town for the purpose of executing the Bond, I apprehend your doing it before two witnesses at your own house will answer the same end, as I shall take care to have it completed immediately on the messenger's return and get him out of confinement. Mr. Brown wishes to have his horse sent him that he may immediately proceed to Manheim.

Your favour of the 22'd I am Hon'd with and have only to assure you that I shall be happy in rendering the Publick every service in my power in the sale of the Indigo now in my possession, which I shall take a pleasure in negotiating on such terms as you shall think reasonable. I am distressed at the indisposition of our worthy acquaintance, Mr. Nesbitt, and hope if in my power to see him to-morrow.

With my best Compliments to Mrs. Morris, I remain

Dear Sir

Your Most Humble Servant,

MATTHIAS SLOUGH.

My Messenger having disapointed me, am obliged to send my son.

If your Cargoe at Baltimore is yet unsold, I shall take the liberty of making you a Proposal to morrow.

HON'BLE ROBERT MORRIS, ESQ'R, Manheim.

Dear Sir:—

You will herewith receive several Packets which my Son brought yesterday from York Town. Am very sorry they met with the Misfortune they have, & at the same time am happy to have them to send you at all, as my Son's horse broke through the ice on Susquehannah several times on his way over, which the whole were in danger of being lost. I have taken every method in my power to drye them as much as possible since their arrival, and hope they will appear plain on their being opened.

On Friday last came to my care from Borden Town sent by Mess'rs Francis Hopkinson & John Wharton four hog'ds & four Tierses full of indigo and one Tierse about halfe full, which have stored untill you shall please to order them to be otherwise disposed of, and remain, with best Compliments to Mrs. Morris

Dear Sir

Your Most Humble Serv't,

MATTHIAS SLOUGH.

Sunday morning

Lancaster Jan'y 29 1778

HON'BLE ROBERT MORRIS, ESQ'R, Manheim.

LANCASTER, Feb'ry 18th, 1778.

Dear Sir:—

Since the receipt of your favour by Mr. Parr I made inquiry respecting the Tun of Steel you mention, and am sorry to inform you that the quantity is not to be had in this place at present. I wrote to Mr. Potts some weeks

since requesting him to send me two Tuns, but have not heard from him since. I intend sending to him in a few days if I do not hear from him and hope to have it in my power to furnish you with the quantity you mention, provided the gentleman who wants it is not in too great a hurry, but what the price will be I can at present not tell you. You may depend on my getting it as soon as possible, and remain with best Compliments to Mrs. Morris

Dear Sir

Your Most Humble Serv't

MATTHIAS SLOUGH.

THE HON'BLE ROBERT MORRIS, ESQ'R, Manheim.

Lancaster, March 12th, 1778.

Dear Sir:—

It is with concern indeed I have to mention to you that I have at length found the bottom of my Wine Pipe, so that I have not a drop left to give to my Friend. I have therefore thought of sending my own team on Monday or Tuesday next with a load of flower for you, by whome I beg you will send me halfe a pipe of such as you think you can Drink when you do me the honour of spending a day with me, and believe me

Dear Sir

Your Most Obliged &
Very Humble Servant,

MATTHIAS SLOUGH.

THE HON'BLE ROBERT MORRIS, ESQ'R, Manheim.

LANCASTER, May 30th, 1778.

My Dear Sir:—

I am favour'd with yours by Mr. Whiteside and have complied with your request in paying him one Thousand Pounds, for which have taken his receipt.

Am extremely sorry to find that he is like to be disappointed in the other sum and have endeavour'd all in my power to raise him Two Thousand, which I could easily have accomplished had the Quartermaster cash in his hands, or had the demand come upon me yesterday, when the Council applied to me to lend them Two Thousand Pounds for a few days, a sum which they sent to Northumberland County for the releafe of the people their, after getting it from me, for which together with the sum of Six Thousand Pounds more I have now orders on the State Treasurer for and can not get any of it for some time. In haste, I remain

Dear Sir

Your Most Humble Serv't,

MATTHIAS SLOUGH.

HON'BLE ROBERT MORRIS, ESQ'R, Manheim.

LANCASTER, JULY 30th, 1778.

Dear Sir:—

I have your favour of the 21st Current which came under cover to Mr. Yeates from Mr. Ingles now before me, and shall agreeable to your request furnish Mr. Yeates with such sums of money as he may require for the purpose of purchasing Hemp, and transmit you his Drafts for the same. He has been abroad at Cumberland and York Courts, so that he has not drawn any. The article of Indigo remains heavy on my hands. Could my worthy friend find a way of disposing of it without loss to me, it would lay me under the greatest obligations.

It will give me infinite pleasure to have it in my power to be of service to you in disposing of your House and Lands at Manheim. If therefore you will furnish me with your terms, you may depend on my best indeavours to dispose of it or get a good tenant. I am infinitely obliged to you for the Case of Clarret. It is very good and shall not be drank without greatly remembering you & good Mrs. Morris.

Permit me now my Dear Sir to assure you that none is happier to congratulate you and yours on your return to your happy habitation than I am, and none is more fervent in his wishes that you may remain happy in the same untill the end of your days than I am, who remains with best compliments to Mrs. Morris, in which Mrs. Slough joins, with offers of my services whenever you shall be pleased to command.

Dear Sir

Your Most Ob't H'ble Serv't,

MATTHIAS SLOUGH.

THE HON'BLE ROBERT MORRIS, ESQ'R,
fav'd by MR. MILN.

Philadelphia.

LANCASTER, Sep'r 7th, 1778.

Dear Sir:—

I have your favour of the 18th Aug't now before me, which I was Hon'd with some days since, and should with pleasure have answered it before now, but on the verry day on which your favour came to hand, my youngest child was suddenly taken with most violent Fitts which continued untill the 29th, when it terminated in the loss of him, so that during the whole of his illness I could not attend to the commands you are pleased to honour me with, and what I have done since his death has been attended with no success, but on to morrow I intend taking a ride into York County where I am informed a quantity of Hemp may be had which if possible I shall purchase and forward to you as quick as possible. There is some little Hemp yet to be had in this county, but not under 4½ delivered here, or for hard money at a price which I have not been able to ascertain, but suppose it to be about 9d. Immediately on my return from York County I shall take the liberty of informing you

of my success, which hope will be to your satisfaction, and remain with best Compliments to Mrs. Morris, in which Mrs. Slough joins,

Dear Sir

Your Most Humble Servant,

MATTHIAS SLOUGH.

THE HON'BLE ROBERT MORRIS, ESQ'R,
Philadelphia.

LANCASTER, October 13th, 1778

Dear Sir:—

I have your favour of the 2'd Curr't, which I received yesterday, and am extremely sorry it is not in my power to comply with its contents. The man who has the hemp for sale for hard money is now here, but is so unreasonable with it that it is impossible to purchase it. He now will not take less than 15 d. hard money, and I know of no other to be purchased in this or York county. There is a young man gone into Maryland whom I have given orders to purchase a few tons if possible, for which have agreed to give 4-6 p. lb., delivered here, but have not heard from him. Have also wrote to my brother in law in Virginia to endeavour to purchase some & send it down your way. Depend on my getting some for you if possible, and remain with best Compliments to Mrs. Morris, in which Mrs. Slough joins,

Dear Sir

Your Most Humble Serv't,

MATTHIAS SLOUGH.

HON'BLE ROBERT MORRIS, ESQ'R, Manheim.
Philadelphia.

LANCASTER, Nov'r 10th, 1778.

Dear Sir:—

By the bearer, Robert Knox, you will again receive 2041 lbs. Hemp which I weighed myself & have no doubt but the weight will hold out. At my return home I examined the weight of the last load and found some error, so that it must stand as it is. Shall send another load by the first waggon I can get, and shall be glad to know if I am to purchase any more. This I bought at 4-3 delivered here. Am in haste

Dear Sir,

Your very Humble Serv't,

MATTHIAS SLOUGH.

ROBERT MORRIS ESQ'R
by ROB'T KNOX

Philadelphia.

LANCASTER, Nov'r 16th, 1778.

Dear Sir:—

By the bearer, John Bowers, Waggonor, you will again receive one load Hemp weighing 2235 lbs., which have no doubt will please as it is very good.

The amount of it you will please to order to my credit at 4-3 p. lb., exclusive of the Carriage, an amount of which shall furnish you with when the whole of the Hemp is delivered.

Have one load more here, which shall also be sent this week, and shall be glad to know if I shall purchase any more on your account, as I may have it in my power to get a little more & have several orders for some from some gentlemen in Philad'a. Hope to hear from you on this head, and remain

Dear Sir,

Your Most Humble Serv't,

MATTHIAS SLOUGH.

HON'BLE ROBERT MORRIS, ESQ'R,
Philadelphia.

I have never before seen any original letters of Col. Matthias Slough. Of course, there may be a number of them in existence, and perhaps this may be the means of bringing them to public attention.

I present these letters to the Society.

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