

to be made to know them; and the apprehension of personal consequences may have some effect on his conduct.

I am, dear sir, Your obedient and humble servant,

T. PAINE.

Since writing the foregoing the prisoners have had their trial; the one is acquitted and the other convicted only of a fraud; for as the law now stands, or rather as it is explained, the counterfeiting—or circulating counterfeits—is only a fraud. I do not believe it was the intention of the Act to make it so, and I think it misapplied lenity in the Court to suffer such an explanation, because it has a tendency to invite and encourage a species of treason, the most prejudicial to us of any or all the other kinds. I am aware how very difficult it is to make a law so very perfect at first as not to be subject to false or perplexed conclusions. There never was but one Act (said a Member of the House of Commons) which a man might not creep out of, *i.e.* the Act which obliges a man to be buried in woollen.

T. P.

TO HENRY LAURENS ²²

[Spring 1778.]

As we are forming government on a new system, *that of representation* I will give you my thoughts on the various classes and merits of men in society so far as relates to each other.

The first useful class of citizens are the farmers and cultivators. These may be called citizens of the first necessity, because every thing comes originally from the earth.

After these follow the various orders of manufacturers and mechanics of every kind. These differ from the first class in this particular, that they contribute to the accommodation rather than to the first necessities of life.

Next follow those called merchants and shopkeepers. These are convenient but not important. They produce nothing themselves as the

²² This letter, probably written in the spring of 1778, was first published in the New York *Public Advertiser* in 1807 with the following introduction: "The following is a letter from Thomas Paine to the late Henry Laurens of South Carolina, one of the presidents of the old Congress. As the ideas in it correspond with [William] Duane's *Politics for Farmers and Mechanics* and may be useful, we have Mr. Paine's consent to publish it." It was reprinted in the Philadelphia *Aurora* of June 3, 1807.—*Editor*.

two first classes do, but employ their time in exchanging one thing for another and living by the profits.

Perhaps you will say that in this classification of citizens I have marked no place for myself; that I am neither farmer, mechanic, merchant nor shopkeeper. I believe, however, I am of the first class. I am a *farmer of thoughts*, and all the crops I raise I give away. I please myself with making you a present of the thoughts in this letter.

THOMAS PAINE.

TO THE HONORABLE BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, ESQR.²³

YORKTOWN, May 16, 1778.

DEAR SIR:

Your favor of October 7th did not come to me till March. I was at Camp when Captain Folger arrived with the Blank Packet.²⁴ The private letters were, I believe, all safe. Mr. Laurens forwarded yours to me but by some accident it missed me and was returned again to Yorktown where I afterwards received it.

The last winter has been rather barren of military events, but for your amusement I send you a little history how I have passed away part of the time.

The 11th of September last I was preparing dispatches for you when the report of cannon at Brandywine interrupted my proceeding. The event of that day you have doubtless been informed of, which, excepting the enemy keeping the ground, may be deemed a drawn battle. General Washington collected his army at Chester, and the enemy's not moving towards him next day must be attributed to the disability they sustained and the burden of their wounded. On the 16th of the same month the two armies were drawn up in order of battle near White Horse on the Lancaster road, when a most violent and incessant storm of rain prevented an action. Our army sustained a heavy loss in their ammunition, the cartouche boxes, especially as they were not of the most seasoned leather, being no proof against the almost incredible

²³ This letter is printed from the original manuscript in the Benjamin Franklin Papers through the courtesy of the American Philosophical Society.—*Editor*.

²⁴ The British had intercepted the dispatches from the American commissioners in France.—*Editor*.