Extract of a letter from Baltimore to a Gentleman in Philadelphia, November 13, 1789.

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Transcript

Extract of a letter from Baltimore to agent in Philada. dated Nov. 13, 1789

[written in pencil: Mary Katherine Goddard]

The change made in the Post Office department of this place, has excited the surprise and indignation of the whole community. This office was kept by a lady upwards of 14 years, whose conduct during that period, gave uncommon satisfaction; and all the Postmasters General have been heard to declare, that the regularity of her accounts and payments were equaled by few, seceded by none, upon the Continent. The subject of her removal being mentioned, one of these Gents. obscured, that he regretted it much, on her own account, as well as that of the public, who could not possibly be benefitted by a change.

As this Lady conducts the business during the arduous difficulties attending the depreciation of the Continental currency, when its value was not adequate to her trouble, she could not conceive it possible that any person would cast a wishful eye upon it, at least whilst she wished to enjoy it, and discharged its duties with so much punctuality and satisfaction. And although there are many worthy offices and Citizens of State, to whom the [illegible] [illegible] as they are, might prove a reasonable wish, yet their sense of humor and delicacy has been such, as to disdain every idea of that kind, upon any other [illegible] than make of her own free and voluntary resignation. These Gents. of course have declined this attempt, and it was reserved for Colonel John White, late Commissary of Accounts, and scarcely known in Baltimore, insidiously to step in and take this Lady's living from her. An act which no Gentleman in this State, be his necessities ever so [illegible] would be mean enough to stoop to for relief.

When the scheme of getting this office was known here, all the merchants and respectable inhabitants joined in an address to be presented to the Post master Genl. and his assistant, that this Lady should not be disturbed in her office. On White's discovering that the people were unanimous by against him, he posted away to meet Mr. Burrell, the Assistant and informed him thereof. Upon this emergency they concluded to represent the affair as irrecoverably lost, for that
Mr White had actually received his Commission, which he would not part with; and by this [illegible], it was expected the people of Baltimore would be reconciled to this fate as a thing irretrievable.

This pathy conduct brings to my remembrance a similar stroke of Art, respecting agent of great family interest and connections, who had the misfortune of being put upon trial for his life, before a judge, well [2] well known to have been long at enmity with his [illegible] and this was the first opportunity the conscientious dispenser of Justice had of doing any of them an injury. The Gents. [illegible] innocent of the charge, was, through the address of the Judge found guilty; and whilst he was upon his trial, an apparatus was order to [illegible] got ready for an immediate execution from the court house windows; which was accordingly done as soon as the Jury returned their verdict. This summary way of doing business prevented any application, wither for mercy, or a reconsideration of the evidence upon which he was found guilty.

Mr. Burrell on his arrival at Baltimore was waited upon by a Committee of Merchants, who expressed the wish of the Town, that this Lady should not be removed from office; to whom he was graciously pleased to promise an answer; but on the day appointed for that purpose, Mr. Burrell like an experienced general [illegible] with an Enemy, thought proper to disappear, leaving for Answer, that he could not comply with their request. He was usually cautious in avoiding an interview with the poor Lady this [illegible] become a sacrifice to Mr. White's influence. It was not safe to let her know in person any of the incapacities under which she labored, lest she should either confute or obviate them; and Mr. Burrell, [illegible] three days in town, never came near either her or the office. This is what the vulgar part of the world call traveling to settle and regulate the business of Post Offices, but which in this instance, the officer scorned even to look at--for it cannot be supposed that he was as [illegible] to do his duty. Thus much however, is certain, that Mr. Burrell was extremely sorry to hear that. The Lady was so strongly recommended on all sides except his own.

The most disagreeable part of the narrative is, that not without the number of years she has been indefatigably employed, a variety of heavy [illegible] has stalled up the fruits of her Industry, which renders her totally incapable of sustaining this additional one Mr. White, her own
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Countryman, has for a long while past often visited her, as an acquaintance, to whom her situation was well known, and her house was the first he came to on his return lately from N. York, when he engaged her office. Little could she suppose that he was employed in supplanting her in a secret underhand man and at the same time visiting her under the garb of friendship; but so it was [3]was, be the consequences what they may, either now or hereafter.

This is the first instance known of a military Gent. seizing and making prize of all the worldly dependence of a [illegible] subject and ally. Plunder thus acquired, should make an [illegible] private blush for [illegible] tarnishing the honorable profession of Arms, with [illegible] taken from even an enemy in petty cash.

[docket] Copy [illegible] respecting the Post Office at Baltimore dated 13th Nov. 1789-