

Maragret Shippen.

Miss Shippen, in her constant companionship with her father insensibly imbibed correct principles of business which were of the greatest use to her in the settlement of her husband's estate.

Benedict Arnold fell in love with her at first sight and on Sept, 25, 1778, he wrote as follows:

Dear Madame:

Twenty time have I taken up my pen to write to you and as often as my trembling hand refused to obey the dictate of my heart, a heart which, though calm and serene amidst the clashing of arms and all the din and horrors of war, trembles with diffidence and the the fear of giving offence when it attempts to address you on a subject so near to its happiness. Dear Madame, your charms have lighted up a flame in my bosom which can never be extinguished, your heavenly imagine is too deeply imprinted ever to be effaced.

My love is not founded on personal charms only, that goodness of heart, that sentiment and sensibility which so strongly mark the character of the lovely Miss Shippen renders her amiable beyond expression, and you alone my happiness depends and will you doom me to languish in despair, shall I expect no return to the most sincere, ardent and disinterested fondness.² Do you feel no pity in your gentle bosom for a man who would die to amke you happy.² May I presume to hope that it is not impossible I may make a favorable impression on your heart.² Freindship and e esteem you acknowledge, dear PEGGY, suffer that heavenly bosom(which cannot know it is the cause of pain without a sympathetic sigh) to expand with a sentiemnt more soft,

more tender than freindship. A union of hearts is undoubted
ly necessary to happiness but I believe that a true and
permanant happiness is seldom founded on the romantic posit
position where fancy governs more than judgement, friendship
and esteem ~~founded on the~~ is the most lasting happiness nad
where there is tender and ardent passion on one side and
freindship and esteem on the other, the heart (unlike yours)
must be callous to every tender sentiment if the taper of
love is not lighted up at the flame.

I am sensible your prudence and the affection you bear
your amiable and tenderparent forbids your giving en-
couragement to the addresses of anyone without his appro-
bation. Pardon me, Dear Madame, for disclosing the passion
I could no longer confine in my trotured bosom. I have
presumed to write to your papa and have requested his
sanction to my address. Suffer me to be favorably approved
before you doom me to misery which I have not deserved but
by loving you too extravagantly. And consult your own happin
ess, and if incompatible forget ther is such a wretch, I
would perish if I had given you one moment of inquitudetto
purchase the greatest possible felicity to myself. Whatever
my fate maybe, my most ardent wish is for your happiness, and
my latest breath shall be to implore the blessing of heaven
on the idol and only wish of my soul.

Adieu, Dear Madame, and beleive me unalterably you
sincere admirer and devoted humble servant,

B. Arnold.

When Arnold finished this letter his reputation was at its best. He
was known as one of the most darin nad bravest of the American

generals ✓

was sufficient

Father very much opposed to the marriage, because Arnold was older, a widower with three children and very extravagant.

Washington wrote to Arnold Mar. 28, 1780. "Let me congratulate you on the late happy event." The birth of a child.

Extract

From Alex Hamilton's letter to Mr. Schuyler. A. H. was present when Mrs. A. was told by her husband that he must leave the country.

"Arnold went into the apartment of Mrs. Arnold and informed her that dealings had just come to light which must necessarily banish him from his country. She fell into a swoon at this declaration and he left her in it to consult his own safety until the servants alarmed by her cries came to her relief. She remained frantic and began accusing everyone who approached her with the intention of murdering her child (an infant in her arms) and exhibiting every sign of the most genuine and agonizing distress. Exhausted by the tumult of her spirits her phrensy subsided towards evening, and she sank into the sadness of affliction. I think the amiable woman was frantic with distress at the loss of a husband she tenderly loved and a traitor to his country and his fame: a disgrace to his commission, which was a most afflicting scene to witness. The general went up to see her and she upbraided him with the object of murdering her child. One moment she raved, another she melted into tears. Sometimes she pressed her infant to her heart and lamented its fate brought about by the imprudence of his father, in a way that would have pierced insensibility itself. All the sweetness of beauty, all the loveliness of innocence, all the tenderness of the wife and all the fondness of a mother showed themselves in her conduct. We have every reason to believe that she was entirely unacquainted with the plans *and the first* ~~and the first~~

knowledge of it was when Arnold^d went to tell her he must banish himself from his country and from her forever.

This morning she is more composed. I pity her and have tried to soothe her by every method in my power, though you may imagine she is not to be consoled. Added to her other distresses she has every apprehension ~~she~~-for her country. ^{but they flatter her} I have tried to persuade her that her fears are ill founded but she will not be convinced. Her pleadings were so eloquent that I wished myself her brother to have the right to become her defender. As it is I have entreated her to enable me give her proof of my friendship. Could I forgive Arnold for sacrificing his honour and duty I could not forgive him for taking a part that must have forfeited the esteem of so fine a woman. At present she almost forgets his crime in his misfortune; and honors at the guilt of the traitor is lost in her love of the man

Irving, quoting Lafayette as authority, says:

In the meantime Mrs. Arnold remains in her room in a state bordering on frenzy. Arnold might ^{well} confide in the humanity and delicacy of ^{Washington} in respect to her.

^{Safely} He regarded her with the sincerest respect, acquitting her of all previous knowledge of her husband's guilt.

~~In a letter written on board the Vulture, he assured her of his safety~~

Washington gave Mrs. Arnold her choice either to return to her husband father in Phil. or going to her husband in N. Y. She chose the former.

On her way to Phil. , she met Aaron Burr at Mrs. Prevost where she spent the night. He offered to accompany her to Phil. which offer she accepted. On their journey he made improper suggestions to her

she so scorned him and held him in such contempt that he soon left her to finish her journey alone.

In England she made no attempt to lead a social life although the greatest social people were attracted to her. Her principal aim in life was the advancement ^{and education} of her children upon whom she lavished unbounded affection. Very good children, faithful, led irreproachable lives, had many of their mother's good qualities.

The accounts of her reception in Phil. are conflicting .

In constant correspondence with her father and sisters until her death.

On May 20th. she wrote to her sister:

I was very sorry to hear of Gen. Washington's death, nobody in America could revere his character more than I did.

Arnold's debts very large but little left after the estate was settled.

The accusations against Arnold filled her with anguish. ^{TP} Aaron Burr's accusation ^{against Mrs. Arnold} was the result of malice on account of an unsuccessful affair with her. This accusation was published in Davis' Memoirs of Burr published in 1836, 50 years after the meeting with Mrs. Arnold and at this time all possible witnesses, except one Major Franks, were dead . He denies it.

Wash. Hamilton and Lafayette believe her innocent.

Even if she had been guilty it is not probable that she would have confided her guilt to Mrs. Prevost, as Aaron Burr's Memoirs say, Mrs. Prevost being a very slight acquaintance.

Extravagance could have been her only motive and her affection for her kindred would furnish a more powerful motive for loyalty than would the desire for wealth for treachery.

ANSWERS TO CHARGES AGAINST MRS. ARNOLD. (291-302) pages.

- (1). The opinion of the people at the time of the treason.
- (2). Mrs. Arnold's own statements, her conduct and character.
- (3). The opinion and conduct of her relations and friends.
- (4). The opinion of gen. etc. who opportunity to present evidence.
- (5). The opinion of historians at this and all times.
- (6). Arnold's statements and conduct.

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