

**PAPERS IN RELATION
TO THE CASE OF
SILAS DEANE. 1855**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649683628

Papers in Relation to the Case of Silas Deane. 1855 by Various

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VARIOUS

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PAPERS

IX

RELATION TO THE CASE

OF

SILAS DEANE.

Now first published from the Original Manuscripts.



PHILADELPHIA:
PRINTED FOR THE SEVENTY-SIX SOCIETY.
T. K. AND P. G. COLLINS, PRINTERS.
1855.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE following pages are published from the original manuscripts, obtained a few years ago, in South Carolina, by the late Edward D. Ingraham, Esq., of this city, from the family of Henry Laurens, President of Congress during a part of our Revolutionary War.

Shortly after the formation of our Society, of which Mr. Ingraham was an early and active member, he complied with our request that he would edit them with a view to their publication as our first work, and the work had nearly been completed when his sudden and lamented death, on the 5th of November, 1854, put a stop to it.

For nearly five months after his decease the manuscripts were mislaid, and we had concluded to present the work in an imperfect form, when they were discovered in the beginning of this month.

The imperfections that will be discovered in the Appendix, are owing to the fact that some of the papers in the collection are lost and others mutilated.

April, 1855.



MR. DEANE'S NARRATIVE.

SIR: I beg leave to remind Congress of my having several times mentioned to them, in my letters desiring an audience, that my detention was very prejudicial to my private affairs, as well as that it might tend to embarrass or prevent the settlement of those of the public, which my sudden departure from France obliged me to leave without being adjusted and closed. The prejudice resulting from this delay I now hope will be fully compensated, from the ample time it has afforded for making the most minute and scrupulous examination into every part of my public conduct, both in Europe and America.

In August last, when I had the honor of being heard by Congress, I expressed my desire of knowing if objections had been made to any part of my conduct whilst in their service, and if any, what they were. Previous to the entering on a general narrative, I take the liberty to mention in a few words the reasons which induced me to make that request.

I set out for Europe, intrusted with the political and commercial agency of these States, and in the month of December following received a commission from Congress appointing me one of their commissioners at the Court of Versailles, by which my former commission was superseded, and a person appointed to the commercial agency in my room. From the time of my leaving my native country in March, 1776, to the 4th of March,

1778, I had reason to flatter myself that my conduct had been such as to meet with the approbation of my honorable constituents; and though the resolution of Congress of the 8th December, 1777, which I was then for the first time made acquainted with, and the letter which inclosed it expressed nothing to the contrary, yet, sensible of the extremely difficult situation in which I had been placed previous as well as subsequent to the arrival of my colleagues; of the variety of transactions, political and commercial, in which on account of these States I had been engaged, and knowing that I had been so unfortunate as to have enemies at Paris and at Nantes who frequently wrote to America, I thought myself warranted to suspect that misrepresentations had been made, either with design to injure me, or through ignorance and misapprehension. My venerable friend and colleague, Dr. Franklin, had the same suspicions, as his letters before Congress show.

Although the dispatches just before sent out by Mr. Sineon Deane and Captain Courter were sufficient to inform Congress, generally, of "*the state of affairs in Europe,*" yet my disposition to pay the most ready and implicit obedience to the orders of Congress on every occasion, with a desire to know in what light my conduct had been represented, prevailed over every other consideration, and I left Paris the last of March in the manner, and under the circumstances which I shall hereafter relate.

Shortly after my arrival I had, from many incidents needless to repeat, reasons to conclude that my former suspicions were not altogether groundless, and therefore that the request I made was proper, and such as my situation required. I therefore made it, and was happy to find that no objections were made to my conduct, or exceptions taken to any part of the narrative I then had the honor of delivering to Congress.

As several months have since elapsed, in which time those in Europe as well as America (if there are any) who have really entertained unfavorable suspicions, have had ample time

to make the strictest scrutiny into every part of my public transactions, I confidently rely on the justice of Congress that if any charges or representations have been made to them against my character or conduct as the agent and commissioner of these States, they will order the same to be communicated to me, and give me an opportunity of making my answer. In the mean time, in obedience to the orders of Congress, I proceed to lay before them a brief narrative of all my transactions from my leaving America in March, 1776, to this time.

In the month of December, 1775, soon after Congress appointed the honorable Messrs. Franklin, Harrison, and others their Committee for Secret Correspondence, application was made to me by Dr. Franklin and others to receive a commission and to transact certain affairs, political as well as commercial, in Europe, but more particularly in France. I accepted their proposals without hesitation and prepared for the voyage, and, having wrote in general terms to my brother and family in Connecticut, that I had undertaken a long journey on affairs too urgent to permit me to pay them a visit before my setting out, and having given general directions as to my private affairs, I received from the Committee, on the 2d day of March, a commission and instructions, which I beg leave here to read (No. 1).

On the 5th I left Philadelphia in a vessel bound to Bordeaux, which met with an accident at sea and was obliged to return into port.

I embarked again on board a sloop bound for Bermuda, and sailed the beginning of April. I arrived the 24th of the month, and having, pursuant to my instructions, chartered a sloop for France, left that island the 4th of May, having written to the Secret Committee an account of my proceedings, and the observations I had made.

I arrived at Bordeaux on the 6th of June following, in full expectation of finding several vessels there which the Committee had encouraged me should be sent out with cargoes to enable