

Samuel Marsden to Governor MacQuarrie

Parramatta August 11th 1818

Sir,

I beg leave to lay before your Excellency the Copy of a letter which I received from M^r Campbell, your Excellency's Secretary on Monday the Third Instant, in the absence of your Excellency from Head Quarters— and without making any remarks upon it at present, I beg to assure your Excellency that no reports such as are alluded to in M^r Campbell's letter ever originated with me— I had never heard but one person say that any Prisoners had escaped, and that was M^r Cox who slept at my House on Thursday Evening on his return from Sydney to Clarendon; And as such circumstances have frequently occurred it had made so little Impression on my mind, that until revived again by the mention of it at Sydney where I arrived on Saturday Evening after dark, it had totally escaped my memory. On my way from the Boat to my Cottage I called to pay my respects to Mrs Cowper, and stopt a short time— during which M^{rs} Cowper expressed her anxiety about M^r Cowper, in consequence of some Prisoners having made their escape— In reply to M^{rs} Cowper I made such observations as I thought were best calculated to relieve her anxiety— as far as I could— As I knew nothing of the circumstances but what I had just heard from M^r Rob^t Campbell, George Street, and Cap^t Welch, the only Persons besides M^r Cox, I had at that time heard mention the subject, it was not in my power to give M^{rs} Cowper any correct information, as the whole that had come to my knowledge was mere common report. The next

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morning after Preaching to the Military, the Parish Clerk informed me, while on my way to Mrs Cowper's that the runaway Convicts were apprehended. While I was at breakfast Burn the Constable, who had been sent for by Mrs Cowper for information, came and informed her he had been in one of the Boats after the Runaways, and that they had taken Twelve of them in the Mouth of Broken Bay, [f] and had lodged them in Gaol. Burn further said, that the Convicts were waiting there to take the henrietta on her return from New-Castle— I thought this story incredible, as Burn said the men had no Arms, and was induced to ask him if he heard the Convicts say so— His answer precisely was "they told us so"; This was the first time I had heard of any report that the Convicts had any intention to take the Henrietta; and this report, as your Excellency will perceive did not originate with me, but with the Constable who related the circumstance to Mrs Cowper, while I sat at Breakfast— on the Sabbath I was fully employed, having thrice to perform Divine Service that I had no opportunity, nor inclination to propagate any reports; and as the runaways were said to be lodged in Gaol early on Sunday Morning, I apprehend all Solicitude respecting them must have ceased to have interested the Public feelings, and from the end of the Sabbath till I received Mr Campbell's letter on Monday I had scarcely heard the subject mentioned, — should the above statements not be sufficient to remove even the shadow of a suspicion from your Excellency's mind, that any reports originated with me, such as are alluded to in Mr Campbell's letter, I beg to refer Your Excellency to Mrs Cowper

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with whom I conversed on the subject as above stated, and from whom alone my friendly and I may add innocent conversation on the subject could have transpired— I humbly beg leave now to remark with due deference [sic] to your Excellency, that had it been deemed expedient to make any Communication to me “Express on His Majesty’s Service” such communication should have been thro’ the Authority of His Honor the Lieut^t Governor, and not from your Excellency’s private Secretary; and had not the Personal safety of your Excellency and family been involved in the report, said to have originated with me, I most certainly should not have condescended to have return’d an answer to such an unfounded, malicious and impertinent attack upon my feelings and Character, as I shall ever consider that letter to be.

Having made the above observations with submission to your Excellency, I wish to call Your Excellency’s attention to the [f] wanton Provocations and unmerited attacks that have for a long period, been made upon me by your excellency’s Secretary. It is with much pain and regret that I feel myself compelled to trouble your Excellency with the present complaint and to advert to fresh Circumstances in order to put your Excellency into full possession of the treatment I have received from M^r Campbell at different times. In the year 1814 two anonymous Letters were Published in the Sydney Gazette, which I conceived contained a false, scandalous, and malicious Libel upon my character the one on the 19 March, the other on the 2nd April. I immediately wrote to the Printer to

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request him to give up the author of these anonymous Letters, which he refused to do— As the Printer of the Sydney Gazette was a servant of the Crown, and the Gazette Published under the sanction of Government, on the 9th of April I made an official application to your Excellency, requesting Your Excellency would direct the Government Printer to give up the Author of these anonymous letters. In answer to my Application, Your Excellency was pleased to refer me to the Courts of Justice for redress, if I felt myself aggrieved— Here the matter rested, as I had not then sufficient proof to proceed any further from my inability to obtain positive knowledge of the Author— If the information said to be since given by the Printer & Publisher of the Gazette, be true, M^r Campbell was also then my secret Enemy as being the Author or Publisher of one or both of these anonymous Letters— The malignancy of M^r Campbell's disposition towards me did not again manifest itself till the appearance in the Sydney Gazette on the 4th Jan^y 1817 signed "Philo Free". As Your Excellency had on the occasion I have mentioned referred me to the Courts of Justice, I did not feel myself justified in troubling Your Excellency a second time with any application for redress, but adopted the recommendation pointed out to me in Your Excellency's answer to my first request; and brought my complaint before the legal Tribunals— M^r Campbell was found guilty of the Publication of the anonymous Libel in the Criminal Court, and afterwards in the Court of Supreme Judicature. In the former when a Verdict was given in my favor I flattered myself there would have been a Termination to a

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business which had subjected me to so much Public suspicion, uneasiness of mind, trouble and expence; but in this expectation [f] I was disappointed; when Mr Campbell's solicitor Mr Garling at the close of the Criminal proceedings Publicly asserted in open Court, that I had precluded his client from Justifying the allegations in the libel, by filing a Criminal information instead of bringing my Action into the Civil Court. This observation calculated to impress the Public mind with the most unfavorable Ideas of my Cause, naturally suggested (in support of my own Character only) the necessity I was under to afford every facility to Mr Campbell's Justification and therefore when thus urged, I brought my cause for trial into the Supreme Court, which I most solemnly declare to Your Excellency was my only motive for doing so, whatever less worthy Causes may have been attributed to my conduct on this occasion; and I conceive if I had not pursued that line of Conduct, I should not have done Justice to my own Character, nor even have removed from the Public Mind those disgraceful Impressions, the Publication of such a letter as "Philo Free" was calculated to have made – I doubt not Your Excellency's penetration of mind will enable you clearly to perceive that in either Action I could have had no worse motive, than that of endeavouring to defend my Reputation and Character from such unmeritted [sic] Attacks. Upon the Trial in the Supreme Court of Civil Judicature, it appeared in Evidence given by Mr M. Robinson, Principal Clerk in your Secretary's office, that the letter "Philo Free" had been copied by Mr Campbell, and that he had seen it in Mr Campbell's possession,

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and in his hand writing, a circumstance fully corroborated by the Evidence of George Williams the Printer, before the Criminal Court, who stated that he saw Mr Campbell deliver the letter "Philo Free" to Mr Geo^e Howe the Master Printer at the Printing Office, who handed it over immediately to him with orders to compose it for the press, which he did, and afterwards printed it. In contrasting these circumstances with the official Letter sent by Mr Campbell to the Judge Advocate on the subject; as well as with the Government General order of the 15th Jan^y Published in the Sydney Gazette, in what light does the veracity of Mr Campbell appear? Was it possible for Mr Campbell to Copy the anonymous letter with his own Hand, to take it afterwards to the Press, to deliver it afterwards into the hand of Mr Howe, Printer of the Gazette, and give directions to him to [f] Publish it without knowing its contents? And must Mr Campbell not have known when he sub-affixed his signature to y^e Government General Order above alluded to, that the pressure of Public business was not the cause as mentioned in y^e said General order, which states, Your Excellency's regret "that it should inadvertently, from the great pressure of Public Business in the Secretary's Office have got admission into the Gazette." At the very time Mr Campbell copied and Published that libel, he was your Excellency's private Secretary, a Magistrate throughout the territory of New South Wales, and censor of the Press, as he hath been pleased to style himself in his own letter before mentioned, — would any Man of strict Veracity, placed in such sacred, honorable, and confidential situations by Your Excellency, be guilty of such

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unpardonable Conduct, I would ask can the Character and Peace of any individuals in these settlements be secure, however high their Rank, holding His Majesty's Commissions, if Men who fill the exalted stations of Magistrates can forget the dignity of their sacred office, and duty to the Public so far, as wantonly to wound the reputation, and injure the good name of any of His Majesty's Servants or subjects by the Publication of anonymous Libels— With respect to my present Complaint I would most readily submit Mr Campbell's letter to me on the 3rd Inst^t to any Gentleman of Honor and impartiality, I would ask His Majesty's Judges, to say if after reading that Letter whether it was not the apparent design of Mr Campbell to associate me with the most abandoned Convicts in these Settlements, and at a time also when some of these were suspected to be engaged in the Blackest Crime— However depraved the Convicts may be, however much they may be hardened in Crime, I would pledge my existence that there is not a single Convict in the Colony so lost to all feeling of humanity, so destitute of all respect for authority, and so blood thirsty as to form a Conspiracy to cut off Your Excellency and all your family, and your staff, and the Rev^d W^m Cowper— when I refer to that part of Mr Campbell's Letter, in which he states a "Dragoon" waits my reply— I would submit to Your Excellency's [f] Judgement what my feelings of indignation were upon receipt of such a communication, from a Man from whom I have received such repeated and wanton public attacks on my Character, tho' I should have conceived that my holding His Majesty's Commission as Senior

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Chaplain to this Territory would have screen'd me from the gross Insults I have met with from Mr Campbell, or any other Private Individual, — on the receipt of my Answer by the "Dragoon" Mr Campbell observes "one object will be the result, which is that His Majesty's "Brig Lady "Nelson will be despatched to New Castle as soon as possible, after "the arrival of "the Bearer hereof (a dragoon) with your answer." I would ask what communication was to be made to Your Excellency by H.M. Brig Lady Nelson? Nothing less than that the senior Chaplain was privy to "this Mysterious subject" the "diabolical purpose" to cut off your Excellency, your Lady, your Child, Your Excellency's staff the Rev^d W. Cowper and several other persons and "that this alarming report had just reached" Mr Campbell's Ears, from which he felt himself called upon "as well by Loyalty and affection, as by official duty, to request that I would furnish him "as expeditiously as possible, with such information" as I might "possess" "on this mysterious subject", and concludes by observing that he had "only to express the utmost reliance on my Loyalty and Zeal on the occasion." After the departure of the Dragoon with my Answer, what serious consequences might I not apprehend would follow from the suspicion, that I was privy to the "diabolical purpose" to cut off Your Excellency, and all your Family and staff! How dreadful the idea! How horrid the Imputation, that such a "diabolical purpose" (had such existed) could have laid concealed in my Bosom for a single Moment — The Combination of all the horrid Ideas that affection naturally excites on the occasion appals the Imagination, harrows up every indignant feeling

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in the Breast, chills the Blood, and shocks every nerve of the human Frame. [f] I would ask what right has M^r Campbell as Your Excellency's private Secretary to sport thus with my feelings and Character "on His Majesty's Service? Deeply impressed with a sense of past Injuries, and continued Provocation, I now call upon your Excellency for present redress, and future Protection. Should your Excellency after the Statement I have made, be of opinion that I have no sufficient Grounds for preferring my present Complaint, allow me to renew my application for leave to retire at once from the Colony, where without your Excellency's Protection, I have no present prospect of remaining a single day in Comfort.

I have the honor to be

Your Excellency's most obed^t

Humble Servant

Samuel Marsden

To

His Excellency

Governor Macquarie

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