

General Nathanael Greene Writes to His Wife



ABOUT THE READING Nathanael Greene was one of George Washington's most trusted generals. He became head of the army in the south in 1780. In South Carolina, Greene saw the conflict between Tories and Patriots. The Tories were colonists who were loyal to the British. On January 12, 1781, Greene wrote to his wife Catherine in Rhode Island.

VOCABULARY

quarter region

assistance help

plate silver

wearing apparel clothing

tantalised tormented

beggars exceeds



As you read how the war affects both civilians and soldiers.

General de Portail being released from captivity and on his way to the Northward affords me an opportunity of writing you (which I have done by every conveyance since I came to this Country.) Could I have only a single line in return to let me know you are well, it would afford me infinite pleasure. Nothing can exceed my anxiety to know your situation, not having heard the least syllable from you since I left Philadelphia.

I have my health exceeding good, being never more hearty in my life; and could I be useful here, and know that you was well, I should not be unhappy.

You can have no idea of the distress and misery that prevails in this **quarter**. Hundreds of families that formerly lived in great opulence are now reduced to beggary and want. A Gentleman from Georgia was this morning with me, to get **assistance** to move his wife and family out of the Enemies way. They have been separated for upwards of eight months, during all which time the wife

Greene has sent letters to his wife by every possible means of transport.

Greene is worried about his wife because he hasn't heard from her since he came south.

Many families who used to have a great deal of money are now forced to ask others for food and shelter.

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never heard from her husband, nor the husband from his wife. Her distress was so great that she has been obliged to sell all her **plate**, table linen and even **wearing apparel** to maintain her poor little children. In this situation she was **tantalised** by the Tories, and insulted by the [B]ritish. Human misery has become a subject for sport and ridicule. With us the difference between Whig and Tory is little more than a division of sentiment; but here they persecute each other with little less than savage fury. When I compare your situation with those miserable people in this quarter, disagreeable as it may be from our long and distant separation, I cannot help feeling thankful that your cup has not a mixture of bitterness like theirs.

A Captain who is now with me and who has just got his family from near the Lines of the Enemy had his Sister murdered a few days since, and seven of her children wounded, the oldest not twelve years of age. The sufferings and distress of the Inhabitants **beggars** all description, and requires the liveliest imagination to conceive the cruelties and devastations which prevail. I will not pain your humanity by a further relation of the distresses which rage in this quarter; nor would I have mentioned them at all but to convince you that you are not the most unhappy of all creation. God grant us a speedy and happy meeting, by giving to the Country peace, liberty and safety. . .

Greene knows that his wife is going through a difficult time, but she is not suffering as much as people in the South are.

Greene says it is hard to imagine all the ways the local people are suffering.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

1. What is the greatest hardship the war has caused for Greene and his wife?

2. How is the war affecting civilians in the South?

3. How do relations between Tories and Whigs in New England compare with those in the South?
