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FIRM IN  
VIRGINIA

1767-1777

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A Scottish firm in Virginia

*W. Cuninghame and Co.*



# A Scottish firm in Virginia

1767 - 1777

*W. Cuninghame and Co.*

*edited by T. M. Devine, PH.D.*



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## PREFACE

My primary debt of gratitude is to Lady Catherine Henderson and her son, Mr Martin Henderson of Mosdale, Castle Douglas, Kirkcudbright, the owners of the Cuninghame letterbooks, for permission to allow their publication. I thank them also for their willingness to make the material available to me for study and transcription.

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Professor Jacob M. Price of the University of Michigan kindly read and commented on my introduction.

I am pleased to record my thanks also to my former student, Miss Elizabeth Gray, who assisted in the preparation of the material and to Miss Mary McHugh who helped with the index.

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T. M. DEVINE

University of Strathclyde  
*June, 1982*

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## INTRODUCTION

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THE RISE OF the Scottish tobacco trade to the American colonies of Virginia, Maryland and North Carolina is one of the great success stories of Scottish economic history.<sup>1</sup> By 1769 the Clyde ports of Greenock, Port Glasgow and Glasgow (because by that date almost all tobacco shipped to Scotland was landed there) imported as much colonial leaf as London and the English outports combined. While imports stood at about 2½ million lbs in 1715, they had reached 10 million by 1743 and after a spectacular spurt from the early 1750s, topped 47 million lbs in 1771. In effect, Scotland had captured the major part of this trade with a share which rose from 20 per cent in 1744 to 52 per cent in 1769.

As is well-known, however, this was an entrepôt trade with the vast proportion of what was imported later re-exported without further processing to Dutch, German and, above all, French

<sup>1</sup> This introduction has been kept to a minimum on the advice of the Council of the Scottish History Society because much secondary material is now available on the Scottish tobacco trade. The interested reader should consult the following, viz: T. C. Barker, 'Smuggling in the Eighteenth Century: the evidence of the Scottish tobacco trade', *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* (1954); B. Crispin, 'Clyde Shipping and the American War', *Scottish Historical Review*, xli (1962); Richard F. Dell, 'The Operational Record of the Clyde Tobacco Fleet, 1747-1775', *Scottish Economic and Social History*, ii (1982); T. M. Devine, *The Tobacco Lords* (Edinburgh, 1975); T. M. Devine, 'Glasgow Merchants and the Collapse of the Tobacco Trade, 1775-1783', *Scottish Historical Review*, lii (1973); T. M. Devine, 'Sources of Capital for the Glasgow Tobacco Trade, 1740-90', *Business History*, xvi (1974); James Gourlay, *A Glasgow Miscellany: the Tobacco Period in Glasgow, 1707-75* (privately printed, n.d.); A. P. Middleton, *Tobacco Coast: a Maritime History of Chesapeake Bay in the Colonial Era* (Newport News, Virginia, 1953); J. M. Price, 'The Rise of Glasgow in the Chesapeake Tobacco Trade, 1707-1775', reprinted in Peter L. Payne (ed.), *Studies in Scottish Business History* (London, 1967); J. M. Price, *France and the Chesapeake*, 2 vols. (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1973); J. M. Price, *Capital and Credit in British Overseas Trade: the View from the Chesapeake, 1700-1776* (Cambridge, Mass., 1980); J. H. Soltow, 'Scottish Traders in Virginia, 1750-1775', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser. xii (1959); Robert C. Nash, 'The English and Scottish Tobacco Trades in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Legal and Illegal Trade', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser. xxxv (1982)

markets. Yet, the tobacco commerce, though not a decisive force in Scottish economic development, was nonetheless a powerful influence on the rise of industry, banking, agrarian improvement and new commercial structures in the western lowlands and particularly in Glasgow itself where most of the merchant houses which dominated tobacco importation had their headquarters.<sup>1</sup> It is generally agreed among historians that the basis of the Scottish success lay in the development of chains of stores by Glasgow firms in the colonies which offered goods, money and credit to planter customers in exchange for tobacco.<sup>2</sup> This 'store system' was a remarkably sophisticated and efficient form of commercial organisation for the time, and it gave the Scottish traders crucial advantages in both dealing with the American planters and in mobilising their shipping fleets to maximum cost advantage.<sup>3</sup>

By the 1760s, the Scottish tobacco trade to the American colonies was dominated by a small number of large merchant partnerships. Towering above the rest were three giant syndicates headed by Alexander Speirs, John Glassford and William Cuninghame. In the 1770s these groups imported over fifty per cent of the tobacco landed at the Clyde ports.<sup>4</sup> The Cuninghame concerns comprised three firms, William Cuninghame and Co., Alexander Cuninghame and Co. (later Cuninghame, Findlay and Co.) and Cuninghame, Brown and Co. The latter two companies were concerned in the trade to Maryland, while William Cuninghame and Co., by far the most powerful part of the group (with a capitalisation of £72,000 in 1773 compared with £15,000 in 1769 for Alexander Cuninghame and Co.), was the syndicate's Virginia house.<sup>5</sup>

In the early 1770s its main partners were Andrew Cochrane, Robert Bogle, John Murdoch, Peter Murdoch and William

<sup>1</sup> T. M. Devine, 'The Colonial Trades and Industrial Investment in Scotland, 1700-1815', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser. xxix (1976), and 'Colonial Commerce and the Scottish Economy, c. 1730-1815' in L. M. Cullen and T. C. Smout (eds.), *Comparative Aspects of Irish and Scottish Economic and Social Development* (Edinburgh, 1977)

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of the Scottish store system see Soltow, 'Scottish Traders', and Devine, *Tobacco Lords*, pp.55-102

<sup>3</sup> Dell, 'Clyde Tobacco Fleet', pp.1-6

<sup>4</sup> SRO, Customs Accounts, Port Glasgow, E. 504/28/28

<sup>5</sup> Signet Library, Edinburgh, Sessional Papers, 162/23; SRO, Register of Deeds, 309/2, DUR, 58; PRO, A.O. 12/56/292

Cuninghame, the managing partner. The capital stock of £72,000 was divided among these men in shares of 240 parts. Cochrane held 40, Peter and John Murdoch 24 and 40 respectively, Bogle 48 and Cuninghame 64. The company brought together old Glasgow money and new commercial enterprise. The initial success of the firm was established in the 1720s and 1730s by Andrew Cochrane of Brighthouse (1693-1777), six times Provost of Glasgow.<sup>1</sup> He had married into the powerful Murdoch clan who had been active in the tobacco trade from the later seventeenth century. By the 1730s his closest associates in American commerce were John Murdoch (1709-1776) and Peter Murdoch (1670-1761), whose son Peter (1734-1817) was a prominent partner in the business in the 1770s.<sup>2</sup> Robert Bogle was connected to a family which had been among the first to prosecute the Virginia trade both before and after the Union of Parliaments in 1707.<sup>3</sup>

William Cuninghame advanced within this pre-existing structure of wealth and business connections to a dominant position within the partnership by the 1770s. He was a kinsman of Provost Andrew Cochrane, the son of a Kilmarnock merchant who was also related to a cadet branch of the Cuninghames of Caprington, lairds in Ayrshire.<sup>4</sup> Like so many young Scots of petty bourgeois origin, Cuninghame obtained a place as a factor in Virginia, in his kinsman's firm of Cochrane, Murdoch and Co. In the year 1748 Glasgow tradition recalls that he exhibited such commercial acumen that he was given charge of the company's business in North America at the early age of 21. It is clear also that in addition to directing the affairs of the firm in Falmouth, Virginia, Cuninghame quickly ventured into business on his own account. In 1759, together with John Doncastle of Maryland and Alexander Finnie of Virginia he entered into a partnership for supplying the British army stationed at Pittsburgh with 'wines, sugars and other commodities of that kind'. Probably it was through such enterprise that he managed to accumulate enough personal capital to return to Glasgow in July,

<sup>1</sup> James Dennistoun (ed.), *Cochrane Correspondence regarding the Affairs of Glasgow* (Glasgow 1836), pp.ix-xi

<sup>2</sup> J. O. Mitchell, *Old Glasgow Essays* (Glasgow, 1905), p.285

<sup>3</sup> Mitchell Library, Glasgow, Bogle MMS, MS Genealogy of the Bogle family

<sup>4</sup> Cuninghame's early career is described in SRO, GD 247/140, Answers for W. Cuninghame . . ., pp.1-16



1762 and obtain a full partnership in the Cochrane company. An indication of his financial standing at the time is that he owned 2,000 acres of land in Virginia. Soon after his return to Scotland he was assumed a principal partner and manager of Cochrane, Murdoch and Co.<sup>1</sup>

From then until the early 1780s, Cuninghame was the major influence on the development of the firm. The remaining partners in Glasgow tobacco houses simply provided capital for the running of the business though they also met and conferred when important decisions on general company policy had to be made. The managing partner's role was, however, of key significance. As a contemporary lawyer put it: 'he was trusted implicitly by the other partners. By him the agents and factors abroad were chosen; by his advice factors were assumed as partners, by him the ships were purchased and freighted; goods sent out to a great amount, tobaccos ordered to fill those ships; stores established in different places; and every transaction of the company directed; the factors abroad acting under him, taking their general orders from him and doing of themselves only those things which fell within the ordinary province of a factor.'<sup>2</sup>

Increasingly, with the success of the enterprise, Cuninghame began to spread his gains into other investments. After 'realising a considerable fortune in business' he bought the estate of Lainshaw in Ayrshire for £26,200 in 1778 and continued to add to this purchase by buying adjoining areas of land throughout the 1780s.<sup>3</sup> Thereafter, the estates of Duchrae in Kirkcudbright and Kelluchs in Peebleshire were also acquired.<sup>4</sup> After the American War of Independence, Cuninghame does not appear to have sought to re-establish his firm's commercial interests in Virginia, though his business associate, Robert Findlay, of the associated concern of Cuninghame, Findlay and Co., did set up a new Virginia house in

<sup>1</sup> C. A. Oakley, *Connal and Co., 1722-1946* (Glasgow, 1946), pp.4-5

<sup>2</sup> Strathclyde Regional Archives, Dunlop Papers, Observations of James Dougal . . . , p.6

<sup>3</sup> SRO, GD 247/39, Memorials and Queries for Lainshaw Trustees (1819); *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, 9 August, 1775; SRO, Particular Register of Sasines, Ayrshire, PRS, 28/54, 436; 30/72, 315

<sup>4</sup> SRO, GD 246/139, Scroll of the Tailzie for the estate of Duchrae and others

company with the Hopkirk family from 1783.<sup>1</sup> Until 1787, however, Cuninghame did maintain an interest in 'several mercantile concerns' in Glasgow such as the Pollockshaws Printfield Co., the Dalnottar Iron Co. and the Port Glasgow Sugar House.<sup>2</sup> He also bought £1,000 of East India stock and had at least £600 tied up in British government bonds.<sup>3</sup> His primary financial interest after 1783, however, was in the West India firm of Robert Dunmore and Co. Cuninghame was related to Dunmore through his marriage to Jean Dunmore, Robert's sister. The company had an extensive trade to Jamaica in sugar and rum and owned three estates on the island valued at £69,000 in 1800.<sup>4</sup> There is no evidence that Cuninghame took an active part in this venture – one legal case suggests that in 1781 he manifested 'a desire to withdraw from all trading concerns' – but equally it is clear that he became extensively committed to it as a sleeping partner. This proved his undoing because until his death in 1799 it was reckoned that he had advanced 'upwards of £115,000' to Robert Dunmore and Co. which, because of adverse trading conditions and mismanagement, was in a condition of financial difficulty from about 1793.<sup>5</sup> Whether William's loyalty to his brother-in-law clouded his commercial judgement cannot now be determined but the net result of his policy of persistent support for Dunmore was the rapid dissipation of the fortune he had made in the tobacco trade. Even when he died, his estate was still liable for the massive debts incurred by Dunmore and Co., reckoned in 1799 at about £45,000. His trustees were forced to sell both the estates in Jamaica and all the unentailed property belonging to Cuninghame in Scotland.<sup>6</sup> Thus apparently ended the Cuninghame connection with foreign trade. His son, William, was registered in the Matriculation Book of the Merchants House of Glasgow in 1804 but this seems to have been a formal admission not necessarily a token of active commercial

<sup>1</sup> SRO, RH 15/2232

<sup>2</sup> Signet Library, Edinburgh, Sessional Papers, 409/22; Strathclyde Regional Archives, Register of Sasines, 9 May, 1800, ff.202-3

<sup>3</sup> SRO, GD 247/141, Jotting of income, 2 Oct., 1800

<sup>4</sup> SRO, GD 247/39, Memorial and Queries for Lainshaw Trustees (1819)

<sup>5</sup> SRO, GD 247/140; GD 247/141

<sup>6</sup> SRO, GD 247/140, Memorial for the Trustees of the late Mr Cuninghame of Lainshaw

interests.<sup>1</sup> One son joined the Bar and another became a civil servant in India.<sup>2</sup>

In the 1760s and 1770s, however, the Cuninghame group of firms was a complex of great financial and commercial power in Glasgow and the Atlantic trades. Through the steady re-investment of trading profit by the families of Cochrane, Murdoch and Bogle, and latterly by Cuninghame himself, the total capital of the group grew to around £100,000 in 1779. Only the Speirs and Glassford syndicates in the tobacco trade could compete with this level of capitalisation. It overshadowed domestic industrial firms by a long way. Only the famous Carron Co. with a capital value in 1773 of £130,000 was at all comparable among private companies, and the most heavily capitalised industrial ventures in mid-eighteenth century Glasgow, the sugar works, had stocks of £7,000 to £14,000.<sup>3</sup>

But the organisation's influence was not simply restricted to its trading activities. Three of the partners in William Cuninghame and Co. had direct connections with the Glasgow banking world. Andrew Cochrane and John Murdoch were two of the founders of the Glasgow Arms Bank (Cochrane, Murdoch and Co.); Peter Murdoch, a third partner, was later associated with the same institution. Like most tobacco merchants, they also had considerable industrial interests in such concerns as the Port Glasgow Sugar House, the Pollockshaws Printfield Co., the Dalnottar Iron Co., the Glasgow Tanwork Co., the Glasgow Bottleworks and the Anderston Brewery.<sup>4</sup>

Essentially, however, their fortunes derived from the importation of tobacco from Virginia, its export to Europe and the supply of British goods to colonial planters. By 1775, W. Cuninghame and Co. had fourteen stores established in Virginia to support their enterprise and their location reflected both the development of the cultivation of tobacco in colonial Virginia and the special function

<sup>1</sup> Strathclyde Regional Archives, Matriculation Book of the Merchants House of Glasgow, 1804

<sup>2</sup> Sir C. E. Adam (ed.), *View of the Political State of Scotland in the last Century in 1788* (Edinburgh, n.d.), pp.36, 202

<sup>3</sup> J. M. Price, *Capital and Credit in British Overseas Trade* (Cambridge, Mass., 1980), p.29

<sup>4</sup> Devine, *Tobacco Lords*, pp.82-3

of Scottish firms, such as Cuninghames, in its exportation.<sup>1</sup> The colony's suitability for the production of tobacco lay not so much in the fertility of its soils but rather in the superb system of transport provided by the four large rivers, the Potomac, Rappahannock, James and York that flowed into Chesapeake Bay. These provided an unsurpassed network of natural waterways which allowed over 10,000 square miles of hinterland to be opened up to settlement and tobacco cultivation. Within this area there were two basic geological formations. The first, in the interior, was an elevated area of older rock, known as the Piedmont, the second a low-lying region of soft alluvial deposits, the Tidewater. These two zones were divided by a fall line, above which navigation by ocean-going vessels was impossible. In the course of the eighteenth century, and especially after 1740, tobacco cultivation crossed this line into areas of virgin land beyond. Necessarily locations on the fall line developed as points of transshipment and towns grew up. Cuninghame and Co. had stores in several of these towns, at Fredericksburg and Falmouth on the Rappahannock, at Richmond on the James and in Petersburg on the Appomatox, a tributary (or branch) of the James.

Moreover, urban development gradually occurred in the interior, whether in centres created as a result of the tobacco inspection act of 1730 (which compelled planters to bring their crops to warehouses for evaluation and inspection), or on navigable creeks where small towns served adjacent plantations, or in the legal and administrative foci of local and colonial government. Again, there were Cuninghame stores at several of these points, at Culpepper, Dumfries, Fauquier, Amherst and Cabin Point. Broadly, therefore, the Cuninghame business was set in the region of new tobacco country. Here cultivation was mainly in the hands of a less wealthy planter class who, unlike their more powerful fellows of the established tidewater areas, did not have the resources to send their tobacco to Europe on their own account. The Scottish store system was very well adapted to their needs because through it they could obtain consumer goods, plantation equipment and, perhaps above all, the credit to enable them to live between tobacco harvests and to buy more slaves to extend cultivation. Again, the Scottish firms with

<sup>1</sup> PRO, T. 79/1, ff. 1-409

their chains of stores were ideally suited to solving the marketing problems of the smaller planters. The merchant houses bought the tobacco direct from them and incurred the risk and expense of transporting the crop across the Atlantic. W. Cuninghame and Co., indeed, apparently specialised in dealing with the smaller men. The debts due the Cuninghame chain of stores were mainly from petty planters owing, for example, £10 or less.<sup>1</sup> The administration of these loans demanded the careful supervision which the Cuninghame factors were constantly advised to undertake by their principals in Glasgow.

The location of the Cuninghame enterprises also reflected the firm's dependence on the French market for tobacco. By the early 1760s the agents of the French tobacco monopoly were buying about fifty-two per cent of their needs from Glasgow firms.<sup>2</sup> The French purchased the lower grades of oronoco tobacco, the so-called 'dull leaf', and the Cuninghame stores were sited to take advantage of French tastes and preferences. In 1775, about two-thirds of their imports came from the Upper James river valley (where no less than eight of the company's stores were situated), an area which specialised in production for the French buyers.<sup>3</sup>

The stores themselves varied in size and function. Headquarters stores were established near the heads of navigation at Petersburg and Richmond on the James and at Fredericksburg and Falmouth on the Rappahannock. They may have been of substantial size. That at Fredericksburg was valued at £1,700 and the one situated in Richmond was big enough to be used by the Virginia Assembly until the state building was completed in 1789.<sup>4</sup> Here resided the leading factors in the organisation. There was a hierarchial structure. The 'superintending factor', the man ultimately responsible directly to William Cuninghame in Glasgow, was James Robinson who was normally based at Falmouth. He occupied the position in the organisation that Cuninghame had done before his return to Glasgow in 1762. While the broad strategy of business derived from

<sup>1</sup> PRO, T. 79/1, ff.1-409

<sup>2</sup> Price, *France and the Chesapeake*, i, p.604

<sup>3</sup> R. P. Thomson, 'The Tobacco Export of the Upper James River Naval District, 1773-75', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd. ser., xviii (1961), p.403

<sup>4</sup> PRO, A.O. 12/56/293; I. S. Harrell, *Loyalism in Virginia* (Durham, North Carolina, 1926), p.95

Glasgow it was Robinson's responsibility to implement it in Virginia and to ensure that the company's storekeepers performed efficiently. His was a position of great trust and, as an incentive to diligence and loyalty, he had been assumed a full partner and allocated a small number of shares in the firm. Robinson was assisted by two other leading factors, who were also junior partners in the company, William Reid and William Henderson, who supervised the stores at Fredericksburg and Rocky Ridge respectively.

Below these men were the ordinary storekeepers, often with assistants, depending on the extent of their clientele, who carried out the day-to-day business of the firm. The first stage in their career was often service on an indentured basis as an apprentice to an experienced factor. So, for example, John Craig, son of James Craig, laird of Braidland in Ayrshire, 'bound and obliged himself, diligently and faithfully to serve William Cuninghame and Co. in Virginia'. Craig was to be indentured for five years from the date of his arrival in the colony and to undertake employment as an assistant storekeeper. During this time, 'he was not to absent himself from the company's service and was to obey at all times the orders of the Company'. He, in turn, was provided with bed, board and washing and a salary which rose on a scale from £5 to £25 over five years.<sup>1</sup> After this, movement was possible within the company's service for able young men because greater responsibilities went with higher salaries and continuous evaluation of the potential of younger storekeepers was regarded as a vital responsibility of the senior factors. The rewards for those who had shown proficiency were considerable; annual salaries ranged from £40 to £100 – very high by eighteenth century standards – and, for the most able, promotion to senior factor and full partnership was possible.

A social and labour hierarchy existed within each store. Indentured white servants were used as clerks or assistants in the larger stores and negro labour employed for manual work. Robinson employed fourteen slaves in the operation of the Falmouth store: five as house servants, one to load and unload ships, one as a

<sup>1</sup> SRO, Unextracted Process, Currie Mack, c/4/13, W. Cuninghame and Co. versus Craig (1777)

carpenter, four to man a sloop, and three as crew of a schooner.<sup>1</sup> These units were therefore substantial enterprises in their own right; the average 'stock' for Glasgow stores after 1750 was of the order of £3,000. A contemporary calculation suggests that at least £25 had to be 'sunk' in the colonies for each 1,000 lbs of tobacco purchased.<sup>2</sup> This suggests, with the Cuninghame firms importing over 5 million lbs of tobacco in 1774, a total investment of about £105,000. Much of this was in credit to planters. By 1775, it was estimated that William Cuninghame and Co. were owed about £95,200, after bad debts had been written off, and the value of their shares, personal and real estate in Virginia was reckoned at about £14,000.<sup>3</sup>

The letters printed below are taken from the three folio letter-books of James Robinson covering the period 1767-1777. They are almost certainly copy letters, transcribed by Robinson's clerk, because although signed by him, they are in different hands. The letters consist of two types, those sent to factors of W. Cuninghame in the various settlements of Virginia and those written to the company's headquarters in Glasgow. In the first category there are several chronological gaps, suggesting there survives in the copy letterbook only a selection of the original correspondence in which Robinson engaged with his subordinate storekeepers. However, the later series sent to Glasgow seems to have survived virtually intact for the years from 1772 until the middle of 1776.

The obvious value of these materials lies in the insight they provide into the business policy and method of one of the largest tobacco houses in eighteenth century Glasgow. Robinson's letters are both frank and very detailed and contain much information on topics as varied as tobacco prices, the conduct of the store enterprises, politics in Virginia and the life-style of the Scottish factor class in the colonies. They also cover a period of intrinsic interest in both American history and Scottish economic history, an era when the very lucrative Scottish tobacco trade and the fortunes based on it

<sup>1</sup> J. H. Soltow, 'Scottish Traders', p.87

<sup>2</sup> Strathclyde Regional Archives, Dunlop Papers, Observations for J. Dougal against E. and B. Cuninghame . . . , p.2

<sup>3</sup> SRO, GD 247/59/5, General Inventory of Slaves and other Personal Estates belonging to W. Cuninghame and Co. (1777); PRO, A.O. 12/56/286-88

seemed threatened by the rise of colonial radicalism and the eventual outbreak of the American War of Independence. Robinson's letters provide a vivid guide to the reaction of the Scottish merchant class to these events until the time he left Virginia in the late summer of 1777.

In the original letters spelling, punctuation and capitalisation are erratic. In the present edition, spelling has been modernised, punctuation supplied where necessary and modern conventions of capitalisation introduced. Approximately ninety-five per cent of the text in the original letterbooks is included here. Some letters and parts of letters have been omitted because the information contained in them was either trivial or repetitive. Opening salutations and extended farewells have also been excluded.





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CORRESPONDENCE OF  
JAMES ROBINSON WITH  
VIRGINIA FACTORS OF  
WILLIAM CUNINGHAME AND CO.,  
1767-1773

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To Mr Bennet Price, Merchant, Fauquier

Falmouth 7th October 1767

I duly received your favour of the 30th September by Mr Buchanan and am sorry for the accident relative to the hogshead of rum.<sup>1</sup> To prevent any dispute with Hackney for the waggonage, you will please make out and send me a certificate that it was entirely his fault that the accident happened and specify the exact damage you have sustained.

The remainder of your goods were forwarded by John Wardside last Friday excepting a few trifling articles which are still here, and will be sent to you with some salt and a hogshead of molasses soon.

I suppose by this time you have got your store fixed out, and that it has a great sale, which I daresay the assortment of goods will encourage as it will be a very complete one after you have received the whole intended from here and some cutlery from Mr Payne<sup>2</sup> which he has directions to send you up. By all manner of means endeavour this fall to extend your sales before Martin Pickett opens store in the spring after which your endeavour will be attended with double trouble and less success. If a man be good it is not material if he cannot pay you any thing next year; by selling goods to such men you no doubt increase your debts, but at the same time, you will extend your influence, and lay a sure foundation for a larger purchase and indeed there seems to be no doing any business of consequence without sinking a large sum. In order to accomplish this end of a larger purchase hereafter, you may be supplied with

<sup>1</sup> About 63 gallons

<sup>2</sup> The factor of W. Cuninghame and Co. in Dumfries

what quantity of goods you want, such as cottons, plaids and other woollens proper for this season and I daresay from the quality of the goods and the moderate prices they are charged you will be enabled to give general satisfaction to all your old customers and to engage a good many new ones. Try if you can to hook in some of the River people such as W. Morgan and Co., those who were former customers to Mr Lawson and now I suppose will be on the look out. Mr Lawson has had in a parcel of goods this fall on account of Mr William Bogle and himself. I believe there is no others concerned. If so he cannot pretend to deal as he used to do, as their capital will not afford it. Consequently his customers who want large sums of money advanced to them at times to purchase negroes etc. will be obliged to leave him and, as this concern is as able as any other to answer their purpose in that respect, no doubt with a little industry we may have the preference, on equal terms.

I would hope this fall and winter you will at least secure all Mr Pickett's old customers who are worth the dealing with. As I have said before I now repeat, although they cannot pay you next year it does not make much odds, the difference is soon made up. I would also advise that you let them have their goods reasonable at first for an encouragement: now is the time to fix your store in a good character, which will give you more pleasure in doing your business, and indeed makes business easier to be done. By exerting yourself properly this winter, I flatter myself, you will have little to fear from Mr Pickett on his opening in the spring, as I should think it strange if he were now able to divide the business with you. He may give you some trouble with regard to the prices of goods, but this you can easily obviate. As to people whose payment is sure once every year or who have the ready money or tobacco to lay down, I would sell as cheap as he or any person did. Martin certainly cannot give any quantity of money to people for their tobacco and from this I conclude, he will deal chiefly with those people who have only one or two hogsheads<sup>1</sup> to dispose off, and who want all goods. Such people as these are the best customers a store can have if at each market they can pay off the old balance and begin a new account. You must be well acquainted with such as are in your neighbour-

<sup>1</sup> A hogshead of tobacco was a large wooden cask containing about 1,000 lbs. weight in the 1770s

hood and no doubt will study to engage their tobacco. There can be little danger in dealing with them, only taking care not to let them run too far and the bounds to prescribe them is easily known in a country place.

On the whole you will observe that it is my opinion and direction that you should let no opportunity slip of engaging customers. The method to be pursued for that end you are well acquainted with, and I would only observe that, in my opinion, a close attendance on the store, and behaving in the same manner to every person, although of different stations in life, when they are dealing together, is a great help.

I observe your crops of wheat have been short, and I note the quantity you imagine you can purchase. You will on receipt of this engage that or any quantity you can. Price here is per bushel, so you must buy it on such terms as we may be no losers by it. Can it not be waggoned here for 6d per bushel? There is no demand here for it at present but I imagine there will in the spring.

Mr Cuninghame<sup>1</sup> received yours of the 5th inst., £8 7s. 3d. cash from John Rector, Sen. The 30s. expenses in the sale of the four servants is credited to Fauquier store in last year's books, as the servant account must be settled in them, you will therefore make your books conformable in this particular. By the first opportunity send down the bonds or a particular account of sales, specifying the servants' names, when and to whom sold, the price, and time of payment.

I have this day received from John Moffat a load of hemp, weight 1835 lbs, which I told him I would house for him and you and him might agree about the price. It is tolerable good winter rooted hemp, but far from being well cleaned. 33s. per 112 lbs in goods, is the price of hemp here, and his is not worth more. If you agree for it advise me that it may be entered accordingly.

To Mr Bennett Price, Merchant, Fauquier

Falmouth 18th October 1767

I have not been favoured with any letter from you for some time. This accompanies John Woodside with 33 bushels of salt, contained

<sup>1</sup> William Cuninghame, managing partner of the company

in 22 bags. These you will empty and return by him, with what other empty bags you have lying by you, and should you not have sufficient to bring up another load, get some new ones made and send down by the first opportunity as it is necessary you should have a quantity of loose salt, as you must be a great loser by retailing out of sacks. Herewith you will also receive some window glass and drop shot, an invoice of which you have enclosed. If there be any other articles wanting to complete your orders for this fall, you will advise and if we have them they shall be sent you. I hope you have the cutlery from Mr Payne. Have you as yet disposed of the two negroes (sent you by Woodside) and for how much?

You will please advise me how you are going on, what sales and advance you have on the goods etc. I daresay I need not so soon after my last put you in mind that now is the time to secure the people before Pickett opens. Furnish them liberally with goods, and what money any good people may want. For which purpose engage them slaves, or you may have what supply of money you order, always bearing in mind that this is in order to extend your purchase.

This fall you will endeavour to secure what tobacco you can at a certain price, do not part with a hogshead but purchase it by one means or another, giving the market price if the man insists on it. I can not yet direct you what certain price to give, I would think from 20s. to your last year's price would do. The last of these you will not exceed until we hear how they open at Quantico.

Mr Cuninghame set off this morning for Williamsburg.

To Mr Bennett Price, Merchant, Fauquier Court House

Falmouth 30th November 1767

Your favours of the 26th and 29th current, are both before me. I observe you have at length sold the negro fellow to Walter David, son of Frederick, for £35 payable in two months, which is well. I hope before now you have also disposed of the wench: if you have not, pray lose no opportunity of selling her off, either for ready money or on credit to some safe hand, as you see cause.

As at present you have no proper place for the reception of negroes or servants, which may be sent up to you for sale, you will on receipt of this, get a log house built for that purpose. Let it be

about 10 feet square, made of strong hewed logs, with a chimney at one end, and place it in some convenient place close to the road. I leave the construction of it to you and hope you will continue it so that there will be no danger of servants or slaves making their escape out of it. You will go as frugally to work on it as possible, and I imagine at this time of the year you may have it done cheaper than at any other time.

The sooner you get this done the better, as I expect to receive a few negro men and women soon, which probably may be sent up to you for sale. You will therefore on receipt of this make it your business to acquaint the people who have got money that you expect some likely slaves to dispose of soon; by sounding them, you can advise what prospect there is of a sale. Pray be as particular and early as you can in informing me who wants to purchase, and what payment you think they can make so that I may know what to depend on before I send them up.

I wrote you by John Ashley some days ago that I could not spare you any butter and advised you to purchase some, even all, for cash. You complain that money is very scarce with you: it is so everywhere. I shall endeavour, as I formerly mentioned to you, to answer any draughts<sup>1</sup> you may value on me. In return you will be as moderate in that particular as possible, and make a prudent use of what you receive. When I caution you thus, I would not be thought to mean that you should lose any opportunity of extending your influence or omit purchasing any unengaged tobacco through the want of money. No, it is only to be sparing of it to those people who are largely in debt already. However, you will take care that any large sums you may engage are made payable at some General Court<sup>2</sup> or immediately thereafter and, on making such a transaction, you will not fail to acquaint me that I may be prepared. If you are in present want of money to engage or to purchase any tobacco please advise and I will send you some, as I will gladly lend you all the assistance I can, in your bending you whole mind in

<sup>1</sup> A colloquial term for a bill of exchange

<sup>2</sup> The highest unit of Virginia's judicial system which met in Williamsburg, the colony's capital, twice per annum in April and October. It was an opportunity for the colony's commercial community to come together and settle their business affairs. See J. H. Soltow, 'The Role of Williamsburg in the Virginia Economy, 1750-75', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd. ser., xv (1958)

accomplishing the great part of enlarging your purchase and preventing Mr Pickett from being of much prejudice to you when he opens. Who knows but your spirited measures may make him give over all thoughts of it; I hope they will. You have not mentioned for sometime past how you go in the sale of your goods; this you will advert to hereafter. I hope you do not pinch the people in cottons or any other woollens, as you know from my former letters you may hence have any quantity this year that you please to order. It must therefore be your own fault should you be in want and the sooner it is remedied so much the better. At the same time I do not think it is proper to have an over stock of goods at your store, but this year it may be excused when the above ends are in view. . . .

To Mr Bennett Price, Merchant, Fauquier

Falmouth 24th May 1768

Enclosed you have invoices<sup>1</sup> of the goods already sent you which I hope have reached you safe and in good order and will give satisfaction on opening. There remains here sadlery, and some other articles which will be forwarded, together with rum and sugar by the first waggoner who offers, as well as your London goods as soon as they reach me. Of these last you may depend on a full supply and indeed I am in hopes, when the whole assortment for this spring comes to your hand you will have an exceeding fine store. At least I am sure they will amount to fully as much as your spring scheme. . . .

To Mr Bennett Price, Merchant, Fauquier

Falmouth 11th September 1768

This will be handed you by Mr John Turner who I have agreed with to take charge of your store after you have given up the management thereof. Your agreement with the company continues until the first day of October 1769 but they have written that they cannot agree to be served by a married man, if a single one can be got, thinking the former must often be necessarily called from their business by his family affairs. You no doubt remember what conver-

<sup>1</sup> An account of goods or merchandise in which items for sale are identified and priced

sation has passed between us since you told me of your intended marriage, particularly at June court.<sup>1</sup> That in my opinion it would be necessary to send you up another assistant, on the supposition that the company would readily agree to your continuing the chief direction of the store for some time longer. In that event I told you that as the trade could by no means afford to pay board for three you must be at the charge of your own or the additional assistants. This you seemed to think reasonable, but at the same time was of opinion that you could do without any more than one assistant and which opinion I could not join you in. But I added that I should not send one up until September when we could judge with greater certainty and when I should have the company's sentiments on your marriage. This time has accordingly come and the above is their determination. However it will be necessary that you continue for some time in the store, both on your own account and Mr Turner's so that you may properly settle and adjust your books and accounts and introduce your successor to the store customers. For this purpose I shall pay you for the time you so continue at the rate of your annual salary, you being responsible for your own board. This proposal must without any doubt meet with your approbation, when you consider in the first place that it is for your own good to have the books and accounts properly settled to prevent all future disputes with your neighbour, and secondly that this is an expense the company might have been spared had they not depended on your completion of the three years contracted for in a single store. These things are indeed so obvious that they need no comment. I shall therefore be glad when I shall have your assent to this proposal, that I may advise the company thereof.

I have enclosed an advertisement herewith which I think it will be necessary to make known. The sooner several copies are made and dispersed, so much the better, as by that means every account in your old books may be finally settled before balancing. Where the debt is considerable, that is to say when it will much exceed the ensuing annual payment I should choose and desire, you may take bonds. Or from those persons who may be affronted if asked for bond, you will take a missive specifying the exact balance due on their transactions with you as factor for Messrs Andrew Cochrane,

<sup>1</sup> The sitting of the Oyer court in Williamsburg



William Cuninghame and Company down to the 10th September instant. As this is extremely reasonable no person, I presume, can be against settling by this method. Mr Turner will probably require a new inventory of your goods for which he will then grant you a receipt; with regard to what goods the store will want for this fall you will furnish me with a list as soon as possible, and I depend on your contributing all you can to their sales by recommending Mr Turner all in your power.

What else may be thought necessary I shall acquaint you of at a meeting which probably may be towards the end of this week. Meantime I shall be always glad to do you any service in my power.

*Advertisement*

Mr Bennett Price is about to give up the management of the store he has for sometime had the direction of at Fauquier Court House on account of Messrs Andrew Cochrane, William Cuninghame and Company, Merchants of Glasgow.

I have appointed Mr John Turner to succeed him therein, and hereby desire all those whom it may concern to call at the store as soon as possible, and adjust their accounts with Mr Price down to the 10th of September, that the balances may be properly ascertained by Mr Turner.

The store will be liberally supplied with goods and money, and Mr Turner will be happy if he can give satisfaction to every person who will favour him with their custom.

James Robinson  
Falmouth 11th September 1768

To Mr John Turner, Merchant, Fauquier

Falmouth 4th October 1768

I received your favour this day by John Woodside. Enclosed you have invoice of the remainder of your goods in which you will find included the articles you mention, and which completes the assortment ordered for this fall. Should you find an opening that you still want some articles or that you have not a sufficient quantity of others to answer your demand, please let me know and the deficiency shall be supplied as I intend you should have sufficient of

everything in order if possible to engross the whole custom of the place, which I think will be no difficult matter, although hitherto our endeavours for that purpose have been ineffectual. The advance of goods<sup>1</sup> ought to be kept up by every prudent method, yet for this year, as I have before told you, it will be necessary for you to be moderate, selling on the same terms everything considered that your neighbours do. In regulating this advance regard ought to be had to the quality of the goods, and the persons to whom sold, as you know goods of the same cost will not always bear the same advance and some species of goods will bear a higher advance than others. The cost therefore must not entirely govern you in the price. Judge the quality therewith and from thence conclude what they will bring. As to the other circumstance, you are fully sensible that every person ought not to have goods on the same terms. It would be unjust as well as imprudent that those people who pay ready money or tobacco, or whose payments are made regularly once every year to the amount of their dealings, should pay as much for their goods as those others do who are largely in debt or to whom large sums of money are advanced. But, then, these variations of price to different people must be done with a great deal of art, caution, or judgement.

Try by every method to conciliate the affections and esteem of the people and to gain their confidence, by being pointed and exact in fulfilling every engagement you come under to them.

As it is late and the waggon is loaded I have no time at present to enlarge. Let me hear frequently what sales you have and the advance on goods, also your opinion of the two kinds of cotton.

To Mr John Turner

Falmouth 25th October 1768, 7 o'clock at night

I am just now favoured with yours of yesterday's date and observe the contents. I approve heartily of your retaining every one of your customers, and particularly Captain Marshall, and if you are obliged to draw an order on me for the sum you mention you may depend it will be duly returned, the moment it is presented. But I shall be glad if you could delay calling on me for the sum until

<sup>1</sup> The markup on a particular commodity

I return from Williamsburg. Try if you can to make the order payable about the 10th or 15th November, when I expect to be able to put money sufficient in your hands to answer any demands against you this fall, and thereby assist towards enabling you not only to retain the former customers, but also to engross the whole business.

We shall be in great want of tobacco this fall. You will therefore use your endeavours to hasten the planters to the warehouse and to buy all you can. The Dumfries market which will regulate you, I presume, will open at 20s. currency<sup>1</sup> and 11s. goods. Mr Payne or Mr Neilson, storekeeper in Dumfries, will keep you regularly advised of the operations there. For your government at all times, unless advised to the contrary, you must keep up with them in their prices. At present I think this price of 20s. will be general, and if it is fixed so, it will be necessary that you acquaint all your customers that you are only to give this price to the 25th December which may possibly prevent disputes in the ensuing summer should the price then be lower, which I apprehend at present may be the case. On the other hand, should you find that the planters will not part with their tobacco this fall without your agreeing the summer's price with them, a custom to which I fancy they will be very tenacious, you must be obliged to comply with that demand, carefully mentioning the same in your day book to prevent all misunderstandings.

In general I shall depend on your exerting yourself to procure as large a quantity of the current collection during this sale as possible as there is a probability of something being made by tobacco if it can be shipped before Christmas. The ship *Cuninghame* arrived last week. She will load in James River. This ship's arrival you may keep to yourself, and indeed the arrival of any of our ships until they are loaded as, when the planters finds a merchant pressing for tobacco, and know he has a ship in the country, it is generally difficult to procure their tobacco as they endeavour to enhance the value. How many hogsheads do you think you will furnish before Christmas? When Mr Price was down he delivered me your letters of the 8th and instant. These I thought to have answered sooner, but delayed expecting to see you at court to which I was prevented from going.

<sup>1</sup> I.e. at 20s. in Virginia currency per 100 lbs. of tobacco

I took notice to him how slowly his settlements with the debtors went on and desired him to apply constantly at the store until such time as the accounts were settled. This, I added, was the least I could expect for his wages. I hope he has complied with my request and that the accounts will be all adjusted by the time I return from Williamsburg. Immediately thereafter I propose to be up at the Courthouse to look over the books.

Mr Price's conduct, if such as you represent it to be, is that of a poor spirited wretch but although I know him selfish I can hardly allow myself to think so meanly of him, as one that would prejudice or hurt people whose bread he long broke, when at the same time such behaviour with regard to himself, can only show his spite. However, if it is so we must endeavour to guard against it as well as we can.

Pray ingratiate yourself with the people; act from judgement and through knowledge of people's dispositions. Give all good usage and drink in abundance. Plenty of money added to those inducements will contribute to raise the advance in goods. But you must sell cheap to particular people. These few ingredients, your own address, cheap goods, plenty of money and good usage will I flatter myself obviate all the ill will, envy and malice entertained against you.

Let me hear often from you and advise me by the return in a particular manner what sales you have had, and what you think the goods will average, also what forwardness Mr Price is in settling his books. You had better delay beginning your new books for some-time.

To Mr John Turner

Falmouth 22nd April 1769

I received your favours of the 18th current on my way to Culpepper Court with Pendleton and Etherington's account, the former of which I have returned that it may be proved. I expect Mr Price will pay the other, at least I always understood so from Mr Cuninghame. We must soon be determined in this matter.

Undercover you will receive an invoice of goods sent you for the spring assortment amounting to £564 19s. 8½d. sterling, exclusive of the charge of importation, which you know is settled annually in

account current between the two stores. If on examining you find the invoice right, place the sum to the credit of Falmouth store. You will find that this cargo, added to the goods you have on hand, will form a complete assortment for the season, and I hope on opening they will prove to your satisfaction being entirely new and of good quality of which you will advise. In future when you are making out a scheme you must be much more particular than in the one sent this year. It must be divided into general heads, such as linen, woollens, hats, sadlery etc. Under each of these the quality and price of the most minute article must be precisely specified. Avoid putting two or three articles together or listing two articles in one line as one of them may be overlooked and not sent.

Please to take notice of some memorandums I have made in the invoice. The gun powder as I have there mentioned is from a new manufactory, and was made on purpose for the Virginia market. Have it therefore tried by some person you can confide in and advise of its character that we may regulate our next orders accordingly. In general you will make what remarks may be material with regard to your goods which will be attended to.

Having written you fully in the fall my sentiments concerning the advance to be laid on goods, I need not enlarge on that subject now. I shall only mention that I leave it entirely to your prudence, hoping that you will take care to have all your goods in the store in proper order, which greatly contributes to make them sell well. The oftener they are taken down and new tied so much the better. Nor need I say anything concerning frugality in conducting your businesses. It would appear from the annual accounts from Fauquier store that the trade there has been carried on at an uncreditable expense. From what else can the excessive dearness of the purchase proceed? I am really in pain every time I consider last year's cost of the purchase from which I am partly relieved on reflection that your account current this year will obviate every complaint. And to promote that end I beg you to look into every part of the management yourself. When you have your eye on everything, business of all kinds will thrive the better. Frugality or good management is extremely necessary at all times but more so at present when there appears a certain prospect of a considerable loss being sustained by this year's exportation of tobacco. However that

may be, such is the course of our trade, that we must endeavour to buy all the tobacco we can at the different stores, at whatever is the market price, the company not being willing to lose any of their interest in this branch to any person whatever. They rather would be for increasing their influence at all their settlements. You will therefore conduct yourself in that particular agreeable to their view, in which you may depend on being supported.

The next ship we shall have in Potomac will be the *Argyle*, which ship may arrive here in June. By her the bulk of your purchase must go home. Endeavour then to secure as soon as possible what will promote her dispatch and she must be very expeditiously loaded. I expect from your store in whole this year from 250 to 300 hogsheads and that you will be able to deliver me at June, besides what I have already received, from 100 to 150 hogsheads.

The market price for tobacco is not fixed here yet nor do we exceed in this town 20s. although more, I believe, has been given in Fredericksburg.<sup>1</sup> However there will be no certain price until we return from the General Court. You will at all times, if not advised the contrary, be regulated by the price here and at Dumfries.

I am glad the sale of William Boack's negroes has turned out so well as to satisfy the demand against you for cash, which appears to be extremely scarce and not to be procured anywhere. Herewith you will receive £50 which will be some advantage in promoting your purchase. There is an absolute necessity for its being well husbanded.

I have not a single gallon of West India rum at present nor do I expect any until the new crop come in. You had also the half of the mollasses then on hand. I shall endeavour to send some more soon. . . .

To Mr John Neilson

Falmouth 25th May 1769

I received your favours last night by Mr Hynd, and delivered the letter therein enclosed to Mr Morson.<sup>2</sup> In consequence of these

<sup>1</sup> The capital of Spotsylvania County, situated on the south bank of the Rappahannock River

<sup>2</sup> Probably Arthur Morson, the factor of the major Glasgow firm of Glassford, Gordon, Monteath and Co. in Falmouth. Library of Congress, Washington, Neil Jamieson Papers, vol. II/2591, A. Morson to N. Jamieson, 1 June, 1770

letters the merchants of this place met, to consider further of the proposal made last Sunday, and of the resolution you had formed in Dumfries upon the same.

After having fully canvassed the matter we come to the following resolution. That provided it is agreeable to you in Dumfries and the gentlemen in Fredericksburg we will only continue to give 22s. 6d. for tobacco to the tenth of June next, and then lower, to what price circumstance many admit of, after having held a consultation on the subject with the merchants of Fredericksburg and your place.

I went over yesterday to Fredericksburg to propose the scheme, but the merchants were gone to Orange Court. We shall have their opinion of the matter when they return and I daresay they will cheerfully come into the proposed measure as above stated, it being so obviously formed for the benefit of all concerned. I think Mr Henderson should undertake for Mr Chalmer at Boyds Hole. Mr Turner at Fauquier will be conformable to our views.

It now remains that I should give you our reasons for differing with you in opinion about the time limited to give the 22s. 6d. price. The planters this way are forwarder in bringing their crops to the warehouses,<sup>1</sup> and are more ready to part with their tobacco, than they are with you. We therefore expect our market in Rappahannock will chiefly be over before the first of July, the earliest period you propose for reducing the price. Of course we shall reap little or no advantage from the measure, for if we give 22s. 6d. to the first of July we may as well continue it to the close of inspection. On the other hand by stopping about the 10th June we shall not only be benefited at present but establish a precedent which may be attended with good consequences hereafter. At the same time this early period will still be more for your advantage in Dumfries although it may be rather too abrupt. Yet I hope the cause arising from the prospect of next crop will be very visible to the planter and the price itself of 20s., being more than adequate to the value of the tobacco, they will be easily satisfied.

After all should you continue to give 22s. 6d. to the first of July we must no doubt continue also. It seemed further to be the sense of our body if the price was kept up to that time, we would further

<sup>1</sup> By the Inspection Act of 1730, planters in Virginia were required to transport their tobacco to public warehouses for inspection by official inspectors

keep it up to the end of the purchase as the difference to us would be but trifling. I wish therefore you may agree with us as to the time for falling, and at the fall we can be determined what price to fall to.

In the meantime we depend no man will give more than what may be mutually agreed upon, either in the price now, or that which is to be fixed hereafter.

To Mr John Neilson

Falmouth 29th August 1769

Before this reaches you I suppose Capt. Duthie has made his appearance at Quantico. It is a little unseasonable however; it will be needless and inexpedient for us to say that the *Triton* was unexpected. As long as our tobacco lasts let us endeavour to give the ships as they arrive quick dispatch. We shall now want 400 hogsheads to complete the loads of the *Triton*, *Argyle* and *Neptune* and where and at what price it is to be procured is a question which is not easily resolved. However, there is no alternative left after we have used our utmost endeavours to dispatch them either on purchase or freight and we are disappointed that the last ship must lie until the new crop comes to the warehouse which the company desires abundantly.

Mr Reid<sup>1</sup> (as I am still too unwell) sets off early tomorrow morning to endeavour to purchase the parcels of tobacco Mr Hamilton mentioned being on hand in the Northern Neck for which he is to give their own price, viz. 17s. in bills. If they decline selling, he endeavours to take on freight in one or other of our ships and, failing to do any business on the South Potomac, he will cross over to Rappahannock and beat both sides of that river.

You have enclosed lists for 80 hogsheads tobacco which, with your quantity, will complete the *Triton's* load. It will be some days before Capt. Duthie is in order for taking the tobacco. I should be glad, if it will not cause a great delay, that we know the result of Mr Reid's jaunt before we take in any as, should Mr Hamilton and the others decline selling, they might prefer a charter in the *Triton*

<sup>1</sup> William Reid, factor of the company at Fredericksburg. Eventually full partner in W. Cuninghame and Co. with 3 shares. PRO, A.O. 12/56/292



to any other it being about her burthen they want. However you need not lose any unnecessary time.

I received your favour by Mr Carr. His lowest terms are 17s. 6d. for 40 to 50 hogsheads. I delayed giving him an answer until next week. We shall know by that time whether we shall be obliged to buy at that price or not. Remember me very respectfully to Mr Payne who I hope is recovered from his indisposition.

To Mr William Henderson<sup>1</sup>

Falmouth 10th October 1769

The post before last I was favoured with your letter of the 22nd and observe you had a very tedious and disagreeable journey from Caroline [County] to your place from the common road being obstructed by fallen trees, broken mill dams, and flashes in the runs and rivers, occasioned by the storm on the 8th of that month. This storm, gust or what you please to call it, has not done much damage this way, either to the crop house or shipping. The *Triton* and sundry other ships at the mouth of Quantico Creek were a little affected by it, but escaped without any damage. Few or no houses were blown down this day. Further up the country they escaped better; over the Blue Ridge in Frederick County they had no violent wind on that day, but very agreeable rains which has been of vast service, with regard to the crops on this side of the Ridge. In the back countries adjoining to Rappahannock and Potomac I believe I may venture to say they will not be less than they were last year. The early part of the crop (of tobacco) was in general cut and housed before the storm, which was of little prejudice to the latter. Now all is safely housed through the continuation of a fine warm open fall. I am really of opinion that the rain accompanying the storm has been of greater service to us this way than the wind did us damage and notwithstanding the exaggerated accounts from the lower and southerly parts of the colony I could believe that the gust has not prejudiced the crop more than 5,000 hogsheads and that it will run now from 45,000 to 50,000. The planter and seller in the country we may believe will make

<sup>1</sup> Factor for W. Cuninghame and Co. at Rocky Ridge and eventually full partner in the firm. PRO, A.O. 12/56/292

what they can of the circumstance of the storm in order to enhance the value of their commodities and they may possibly succeed. We must secure the *Cuninghame's* and *Cochrane's* loads before Christmas. The former ship will be with you early in November and the latter in this river before January.

I am sorry to hear that you only procured in your trip to Nansimond 7 hogsheads of old tobacco. Not that we want any to complete the *Neptune's* load, but I should have been glad had you purchased 150 or 200 hogsheads of last crop towards promoting the *Cuninghame's* load in the fall. The dispatch of this ship you will bear in mind and if any opportunity offers for making contracts for the new crop, to be delivered against a future day, embrace it. We shall be pinched here to load the *Cochrane* this fall from the store collections and I am much afraid the price given for the collections will be extravagantly high from the new stores fixed here and at Fredericksburg. Mr James Robb<sup>1</sup> has opened a store there since your last visit. It is rumoured that Mr Briggs offers 25s. to the planter and 60 per cent more than any person here will give. If this is the truth what will be our condition?

I observe there are some goods come in for Petersburg store which is well. These goods were imported for that store by the *Triton* and *Cochrane*. They had the charge of exportation laid upon them at Glasgow, that being where they were shipped, and it was uncertain where they might be opened. In a late letter the Company wrote me of this and desire that Mr Chalmer may be employed to make out a new invoice deducting that charge as he is very well acquainted with what is laid on every different species of goods. This they have no doubt informed you of. I think it would be very necessary if it is not already too late, by which I mean if the invoices have not been shown to a number of discerning planters. If this measure is necessary the sooner it is done so much the better. I shall bring the shop notes for the London goods to Court with me.

I should be glad to know if you have laid out the back store and in what place.

The *Neptune* and *Argyle* are now taking in their loads, the former at the mouth of Quantico and the other at Hobbs Hole. I hope they

<sup>1</sup> Factor of Robert Bogle and Robert Scott, a Scottish house in London which failed in the crisis of 1772. PRO, T. 79/73, book 6, ff.191-237

will both sail before the General Court but the time is very uncertain as their tobacco lies in a number of scattered warehouses and you too well know there is no dependance on the crops.

Capt. Bayne of the *Argyle* advises me of having shipped on board a cargo for Petersburg addressed to Mr Thomas Gordon 726 bushels loose salt and 250 sacks. Please to attend to this (I am directed to inform you). Your bills must be drawn on Messrs. William Cuninghame and Company that they may come properly to their hands.

To Mr William Henderson

Falmouth 14th November 1769

The enclosed letter from the Company was forwarded to me last Thursday by express from Port Tobacco, Maryland, having been enclosed to Mr David Walker<sup>1</sup> by the *Jeanie*. From it you will observe what opinion the Company have formed for our fall price of tobacco, viz. 15s. in bills, and in consequence thereof the plan they would have pursued in purchasing a large quantity of Lower James River tobacco to load the *Cuninghame* and a chartered ship which they may either send you or may freight one in the Country if she can be loaded before January and for the northern rivers. We are to have the *James*, *Cochrane*, *Triton* and *Neptune* or *Argyle* between the first of December and the April court.

From the experience we had at the General Court and the price tobacco has broken at in every part of the colony I may safely say they will be fatally deceived in the price they conjectured we would be able to buy tobacco at. It seems to be almost one third more than the above price. Of course, as your situation is entirely different from what they supposed, you will not endeavour to procure any vessel on charter and will restrict yourself in buying as little tobacco as possible at the high prices now giving, only taking care to secure the *Cuninghame's* load at the same time. I am really under some apprehension you may have a ship sent to you on charter. I hope otherwise and from your not being hard pushed for tobacco this

<sup>1</sup> Factor for Alexander Cuninghame and Co. in Maryland. This firm was headed by William's brother, Alexander, and William had ten of the sixty shares in it. Signet Library, Edinburgh, Sessional Papers 162/23/1. Walker eventually became a full partner in the successor to A. Cuninghame and Co., Cuninghame, Findlay and Co. PRO, A.O. 12/56/305

fall and the large quantity there will be at market throughout the favourable weather, that price must be reduced, if not at the December court, immediately thereafter. If the French<sup>1</sup> did not come to market before the accounts of the storm reached Britain they might probably continue the old price of 2½d. for all the tobacco bought at the fall sales. However, if their advices from America are good I think we can hardly expect their Spring price to be more than 2½d. at which the Company will not save themselves. For the tobacco we shall send them this fall we shall hear fuller from them by the *James* and *Cuninghame*. At present I think if tobacco could be procured with you in January and February at 16s. in bills so as to leave from here in the first week of March I think we would be justifiable in sending them home a load in a chartered ship. But it will be time enough to talk of this at the Oyer Court.<sup>2</sup>

I believe we are now prepared for the *James* in Rappahannock and if the weather continues good to Christmas we shall also be almost able to load the *Cochrane* from our store collections on this river added perhaps with some trifling bill purchases I may make at the Oyer Court. I incline to lay off to that time hoping the sellers in the country will not be so sanguine in their expectations. If the *Triton* comes near straight out she will meet with immediate dispatch in Potomac. The next ship which arrives after her I imagine must be loaded in James River as the one which brings the goods must come to Rappahannock.

There is a large proportion of the crop come to our warehouses and the price current here, and at Fredericksburg and Dumfries is 25s. Money is very scarce; all mine is expended.

To Mr William Henderson

Falmouth 12th February 1770

I am favoured with yours of the 5th Current by Jonathan and take notice of the charge on his account. Every reason that probably could be urged might induce you to pay his expenses to and from

<sup>1</sup> The agents for the Farmers General of the French customs who purchased the bulk of the tobacco exported by W. Cuninghame and Co.

<sup>2</sup> This met in Williamsburg in June of each year

James River, and I think you must in justice charge the ships with it in future. I depend on his bringing Diamond; the want of him grates me a good deal, especially when I consider the order he was in at December Court. Let me beg you to give directions that he will be well taken care of as he must be my mainstay through the summer.

The *Cuninghame* is gone at last. Her detention will be most unlucky on many accounts. Should it be determined that she shall return with our Spring goods I am afraid it will be so although I hope and have written the Company otherwise. I suppose you have the best part of another ship's load prepared. Joshua Storrs was over here last week purchasing a small quantity of tobacco. He wanted stem chiefly but there is little or none this way so early in the year. I believe he bought about 60 hogsheads tobacco, 20s. sterling bills, giving the preference to those people who buy clothes from him. This transaction, trifling as it is, serves to raise the views of our sellers and I am of opinion it would be difficult here to buy any tobacco under 19s. or 20s. bills. They fortify this hope by viewing the little value of sterling money when compared with currency and as some English ships are now expected to arrive in the river they collude to keep up their tobacco and wait the event. It is a doubt whether the store price can or will be reduced, for although we refuse to take tobacco at present from the planters at 25s. yet should our new stores continue to give that price so must we. Also, I think not to buy any tobacco till April Court for bills unless it can be bought for a price that will answer. It is happy, therefore, that we shall be able to load all our ships expected before then from the store collections. There is no word of the *Cochrane* and I am afraid Capt. Gibson has lost the way. Should she not arrive soon we must think of chartering and you will please to be on the enquiry.

To Messrs. Cochrane & Murdoch<sup>1</sup>

Falmouth 24th February 1770

Your favours of the 4th September last relative to the debts due to you by Robert Rutherford and John Heath were duly received.

<sup>1</sup> The Glasgow Arms Bank, founded in 1752 by the tobacco merchants, Andrew Cochrane (1693-1777) and John Murdoch (1709-1776). In 1770 both men were partners in W. Cuninghame and Co.

It has never been in my power to procure payment from either of them. On the 30 August, 1768 Rutherford confessed judgement to you on two suits in Fredericksburg Court, one for £192 14s. 9d., with interest from 1st September, 1766, staying execution to the 10th June 1769, the other for the like sum with interest from the 1st September, 1767, staying execution to the 20th October 1769. After the credit of the first judgement elapsed a writ was issued against him on serving which he gave security for payment in three months. Before the end of that time his privilege as a Burgess commenced and there has been no Court in Fredericksburg since the last session of Assembly in which we could motion for a judgement on the bond. Meanwhile I have directed to issue against his estate on the second judgement, and I hope to operate payment for the whole debt during the course of next summer.

I have often pressed John Heath for his debt which amounts to £212 10s. stg. due 30th April 1769. He has often fixed on a time of payment and always broken his promises for which he continues to give specious reasons. In a late letter he advises that his last purchase of tobacco in the eastern shore was damaged in the public warehouses by the storm of the 8th September and prevented him from paying me at the December Oyer Court. I am at a loss what to think of his behaviour. However I judge it will be proper to delay for some time longer the next suit.

When I am in cash for either of the debts the quickest method will be used in remitting it.

To Mr William Henderson

Falmouth 3rd March 1770

Since writing you I am favoured with yours of the 14th and 23rd. The first advised of your having sent to the care of Mr Robert Shedden and Co.<sup>1</sup> three bags of cotton with which you have charged Falmouth store. They are not come to hand. When they do I shall attend to the account. In my last you had my sentiments of your transaction with Mr Coutts. I hope you found him more pliable when you went to Richmond. I am anxious to hear what

<sup>1</sup> The Glasgow firm of Andrew Sym and Co. trading as Robert Shedden and Co. in Virginia. Had a store in Smithfield, Virginia. PRO, T. 79/7/No.2

footing that matter rests upon, I cannot think he is entitled to keep possession contrary to our inclination to November next; if otherwise it will be an extreme hardship, not only in preventing us from opening at that place in the summer, in case we should be able to make up an assortment of goods from the other stores and you can engage a young man as an assistant to A. Chalmer (who is well acquainted with the business and the circumstances of the people who trade to that place) but also in occasioning our being too late in the fall as we agreed at the December Court. I advised the Company this ought to be done at all events. However, should you be disappointed in procuring an assistant now and have no view of one by the fall and you have found Mr Coutts has an absolute right to keep possession to November, what do you think of delaying opening there until Spring 1771 and fix a store this fall at Rocky Ridge where I understand a house may be rented? Whatever opinion you may be of with regard to this proposal I think the Company ought to send in an assortment of fall goods to open at one or other of the places.

Our London goods are now delivered from the *Hamburg*, Capt. Esten. They have come in due time. I wish those from Glasgow were here also as in consequence of the Association<sup>1</sup> and in imitation of the northern colonies some objections may be raised to landing the prohibited articles. The *Justicia*, Capt. Somerville, is lately arrived in this river from London, 10 weeks passage. It is said she brings advices of tobacco rising a farthing per pound at London from the account of the September storm. This is an additional worry but we are still calm. That storm, if it had any effect on the markets in Britain, in all probability it would not last long. For in truth it ought to have had none which must have been soon known. If this is the case, we cannot from any just cause think that the French, who are the chief buyers of the tobacco we export, will give more than 2 $\frac{5}{8}$ d. which price may, barring accidents, be conjectured to stand through the summer. This is a miserable prospect to the exporter. From a calculation which you can readily make you

<sup>1</sup> A non-importation association against British goods was established in Virginia on 18 May, 1769 in retaliation against British revenue legislation in the thirteen colonies. Little attempt was made to enforce the regulations. A. M. Schlesinger, *The Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution, 1763-1776* (New York, 1939 ed.), pp.139-40, 198-9

will find that if tobacco costs here 18s. stg. they must lose almost 20s. stg. on each besides all the trouble in buying and selling. At 16s. 8d. here they would save themselves, but I am afraid this is a price at which none can be bought for some time.

The *Cochrane* is not yet arrived. It is surprising what detains her. It is no less remarkable that no vessels have arrived from Glasgow in such a long course of time. Should any arrive in James River soon that left the Clyde since the middle of November, pray be at the trouble to enquire of the captain if he knows anything about the *Cochrane*.

On second thoughts we have determined not to charter until we hear from the Company for these reasons: that their own ships which may be expected before the first of June will carry home all our store collections prior to that time and that it does not seem to be advisable to buy tobacco for bills at 18s. which we presume is the lowest price it can be bought anywhere in the colony at present, and that there is little probability of its being lower between this time and the foresaid period.

I think at present the *Neptune* must also load here, as we shall have 800 hogsheads on hand soon. Consequently you need not be preparing for her on James River; you have some tobacco lying by you at present. Pray advise the quantity as we may probably want 100 to 150 hogsheads to complete the *Triton's* load in Potomac should she arrive soon. I would incline you should send that quantity round for her if you have it on hand so that we may all avoid purchasing with bills as long as possible. With regard to sending round this tobacco you shall have timeous notice. Should the *Neptune* come into Rappahannock, which seems very probable, you will have the *Argyle* to provide for in James River. She may be expected about the April Court.

At this time there is no such thing as fixing on a certain plan of procedure with regard to loading these ships and we must retain in an uncertainty until we have letters from Glasgow.

Mr Turner is not yet returned from the north. You seem in your last to entertain a bad opinion of the Exchange<sup>1</sup> in April. However

<sup>1</sup> The rate of exchange was the difference between the value of the British and Virginian currencies. The rate varied with the fluctuation in the balance of payments between Britain and Virginia



I am afraid it is too just a one. Mr Esdale drew for Mr Banks at last Court at 10 per cent, which you may depend on as a fact, and further that the bill was payable at a certain house in London. Our Exchange at Philadelphia will be something better. Tomorrow I leave this for Fredericksburg and I expect to hear from you on my return and by next post I hope to be able to write you with greater certainty.

To Mr William Henderson

Falmouth 13th March 1770

I am favoured with yours of the 9th and am sorry to observe Mr Coutts is so obstructive. If he remains in that disposition there is no help for it. However, with regard to this transaction I refer you to my letter of the 3rd inst. and shall leave the further consideration of the matter until I see you. In the letter now before me you are silent with regard to the enquiry you have made for an assistant properly qualified for Mr Chalmer. Could such be obtained you should not differ with him on wages. The prospect concerning this settlement seems to be on a precarious footing at present. However, I am still of opinion that if the Company send an assortment of goods this ensuing fall and if we should be prevented from opening them at Shockoe, they may be fixed out at Rocky Ridge, which would answer as well, it being more advisable to commence a trade at the last place than the other at that season of the year.

Yesterday, on my return from Fredericksburg, I had the pleasure to learn that the expresses arrived from the *Cochrane* in the morning which brought me letters from the Company of the 24th November, 18th December and 9th January. I imagine there were letters for you which the Captain has forwarded by post. If so it will be needless for me to enter upon the contents of these letters and I shall therefore only take notice in general: that the *Neptune*, *Triton* and *Argyle* were safely arrived; that the arrangement for the remaining ships during this purchase will be strictly conformable to the plan we fixed upon when you were here. In consequence the *Neptune* and *Triton* will receive the goods for Rappahannock and Potomac and would sail in January. The goods for James River were to be shipped in the *Argyle* which would sail soon after them. The September hurricane made great noise at home and occasioned the

price of tobacco to rise in London and the French price of 2½d. to be refused in Glasgow. However, the ferment did not continue long as the price was reduced in London to the same as it was before those exaggerated accounts of the storm reached Britain. They expected 3d. per lb in Glasgow but I am not advised of any sale that has been made since the 2½d. and, indeed, as I mentioned in my last, I do not think the price will be higher.

We want tobacco for both the *Neptune* and *Triton*. I suppose you will be fully prepared to give the *Argyle* dispatch. Pray what price do your sellers expect?

Mr Turner returned last week from Philadelphia. He only brought with him £1,000 stg. value of specie in consequence of exchange falling by 50 per cent. The proportion therefore that we can spare you is not so much as I hoped it would have been. If possible I intend to come your way soon but I shall be obliged to take the Northern Neck in my way. If so I will bring your money but should you not see me at Cabin Point before the end of next week you may conclude I am detained at home.

To Mr William Henderson

Falmouth 20th March 1770

I am favoured with yours (this evening) of the 14th inst. In my last of the 13th I advised you of the *Cochrane's* arrival. I observe from yours now before me that the Company's letters to you are of the same tenor with those to me, the contents of which I took notice of in my aforesaid letter. I will be happy if the French price reaches 3d. For my part I am clear in opinion it will not at the Spring sales exceed 2½d. The sellers this way refuse to take less than 19s. or 20s. stg. for their tobacco which is a price I cannot think of giving. Failing therefore to procure what we may want for the dispatch of the *Neptune* and *Triton* at reasonable terms on this river I must purchase some of your tobacco on James River or let the ships lie until we can complete their load from the store collections. I am glad you are so nearly prepared for the *Argyle*. The *Cochrane*, I expect, will be soon loading. The last of her tobacco will leave here in three days and I propose to be at Hobbs Hole to settle with the Captain on Thursday or rather Wednesday next before which time I cannot come your way. I expected to have had an opportunity to

go to Petersburg at the end of last week. It may still happen in a day or two by which I purposed, and do still, to send the specie to Mr Gordon. It will be £500 current money in all. The money emitted in Maryland is not in circulation; it has therefore no effect hitherto in raising the Exchange and indeed as it will come slowly into circulation the effect it may have in raising the Exchange is very uncertain. The Philadelphia Exchange continues fluctuating from 50 to 52½. It may continue so for some time as the exportation of wheat continues briskly. A repeat of the Revenue Acts, it is thought, would contribute to raise it higher.

To Mr William Henderson, Cabin Point

Falmouth 9th April 1770

I left this Sunday the first inst. with the full intent of visiting you at Cabin Point before I returned but the severity of the weather at the beginning of the week prevented Capt. Bolton from storing any tobacco; the last crop could not with a probability of safety lie alongside from Monday to Thursday morning. Consequently it was Friday evening before he completed his load and all that time I was detained at Hobbs Hole.

By Mr Cuninghame, who is the bearer hereof, you will receive:

227 pistoles <sup>1</sup> of different kinds @	21s. 6d.	£244 os. 6d.
20 carolines	31s. 1d.	31 5s. od.
3¾ moyderes <sup>2</sup>	35s.	6 11s. 3d.
7 ducats	10s. 8d.	3 14s. 8d.
10 guineas	26s.	13 2s. 6d.
75 half guineas	46s. 3d.	173 8s. 9d.
		<hr/>
		£472 2s. 8d.

From the account of the sale of your bills which is under cover you will observe that I have charged you specie at the Pennsylvania rates exactly to balance the amount of your bills sold. From which specie I have retained one hundred half guineas and entered them to

<sup>1</sup> French or Spanish piece of gold: value, according to John Moir, *Book-keeping Moderniz'd* (Edinburgh, 1773), was £1 3s. 9d.

<sup>2</sup> Portuguese piece of gold: value in 1773, £1 18s. 9d.

the credit of the store account and that the above now sent you is the remainder of the money received for your bills. These things will appear plainer from the account to which I refer and to which I beg you will make your books conformable. You will find the transaction to yield by the weight an Exchange of 15 per cent. But if you pass the specie at the rates I mention above at which they pass current here the exchange will turn out 17½ per cent.

My last advices show that 52½ per cent may be obtained for bills in London at 30 days sight at which rate the Exchange may continue for some time. Low as this exchange really is, I imagine it will be preferable to that obtained in the April General Court unless an importation of specie from Europe should take place before that time. I should be glad to know what expectations you entertain on James River of the exchange at Court. Meanwhile by next post I purpose to transmit some bills to Philadelphia to sell at the foresaid rate, thereby laying in provision to enable our correspondent to pick up all the Spanish gold he possibly can which is 5 per cent better than to receive the remittance in half guineas or Portugal coin. Should you incline to be supplied with money through this channel please forward your bill by the bearer. They must be properly assorted in different sums.

Mr Balfour was up at Fredericksburg lately and bought some tobacco from J. Glassell at 20s. stg. I was glad to observe you were prepared for the *Argyle* as tobacco is much lower with you than it is here. I think it will be requisite for you to prepare the *Cunninghame's* load and for that purpose I would recommend your immediately buying the greatest part of what may be required for her dispatch if it can be laid in at under 18s. bills. This I would incline should be done before the General Court for I much dread the operations of those English purchasers at that Court. At any rate I am of opinion tobacco will not be under 18s. there. Should you decline buying until Court it will be well to secure an offer from the sellers at that place.

To Mr David Walker

Falmouth 17th April 1770

I was this day favoured with yours of the 15th instant. In answer to a letter I wrote Messrs Gibson and Granberry relative to the pork,

they wrote me that the price soon after December Oyer Court rose to 52s. 6d. per barrel payable in June and 55s. in October deliverable at Suffolk at which price it still stands. They add, should you incline to favour them with a new order for that article, you may depend on their supplying you on as low terms as it can be purchased there at the time such order may get to their hands. They are soon to send a vessel up the Potomac for pig iron so that if pork should be ordered it can be sent at a low freight. I have orders for the single chair and the furnisher promised to have it made by the first of May. I could not inform him the cypher which you proposed having on the sides. You will please to ascertain that point as soon as possible and then I can advise you when the chair may be sent for.

I am sorry to observe from your letter that the *Neptune* would be detained so long at home. It is a full month later than I expected. She may therefore not arrive for some time. We have reason to look for the *Triton* daily. I wish to have advices from Glasgow being extremely desirous to hear the French price for tobacco at the spring sales and the prospect that then opened before our General Court. These advices I am afraid will not justify us giving 25s. currency to the planters. Meanwhile it looks as though that price will continue through the whole purchase. What the bill price may be is uncertain. The merchants who sell in the country ask 20s. stg. which indeed has been obtained for one or two small parcels.

You seem uncertain whether you are going to Williamsburg. I propose to leave this place on Friday the 27th and, as I imagine Port Royal is in your way, I shall lodge there that night where and when I shall be glad to see you, as this route is a little out of my way. If you have any opportunity between the receipt hereof and that time please acquaint me of your determination. It is generally believed that our exchange from the scarcity of money will be low at this Court. Should the demand be equal to what it was in December the money holder may fix his own terms; in that case modesty alone will prevent currency from being as great a value as sterling. However, I know some money has been engaged at 15 per cent for bills at Court and as that rate is abundantly too low, and few contracts made wherein the consideration was current money, I hope it will not be less. If so it will be nearly on a par with your exchange at 50 per cent.

We have fine growing weather and a prospect opening for a large crop of tobacco.

To Mr William Henderson

[no date]

I was last night favoured with yours of the 25th inst. and am sorry to observe the detention of the *Argyle* through the craft from Petersburg. This begins to be a common circumstance and to prevent its spreading I wish some method could be fallen upon to bestow an exemplary punishment on the skippers.

The *Triton* left Quantico on Thursday the 17th and the *Neptune* lay clear at Hobbs Hole the 23rd waiting for a fair wind, which happened last Friday. I therefore hope they are now at sea.

On Sunday I had a letter by the *James* from the Company dated the 23rd March. The French at that date remained firm to their offer of 2½d. for tobacco, which was as firmly refused, notwithstanding their endeavours to purchase off some people in an underhand manner. I am afraid the Alexanders<sup>1</sup> will overcome this steadiness of the Trade and oblige them to accept their offer as there certainly is a large quantity of tobacco in Britain and money is extremely scarce.

The *Cuninghame* was not arrived at the date of this letter from the Company. They complain of her being long out; I understand from Capt. Wood she got in about the first of April.

You are dry on James River, we are no less so here since the change of the moon on Thursday. The weather has been showery but not so much so in general as to make a good season. However, plants are plenty and there have been since then a good many planted. A considerable part of which I hope will live, especially these planted on low and fresh grounds where they do not require much rain at the early time of the year. The weather is cool and cloudy here and promises more seasons. Planters will complain but interested complaints are not much to be regarded.

The rate of exchange at Philadelphia is 150 per cent and not likely to rise soon.

<sup>1</sup> William Alexander and Co. were solely responsible for the French purchase of tobacco in Scotland between 1756 and 1771. See Jacob M. Price, *France and the Chesapeake* (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1973), pp.606ff.

To Mr William Henderson

Falmouth 10th July 1770

I am this afternoon favoured with your letter of the 6th July by post. By the same conveyance I received a letter from Mr John Stewart dated the day before from Hampton and accompanying the Company's letters by the *Cuninghame*. I find nothing new in these letters, not anything but what we were informed by the *Katie* when at Williamsburg. It is with pleasure that I receive the news of the *Cuninghame's* arrival and the further knowledge of your intention of going down the country to superintend the tobacco going on board the different craft. You would be advised on Sunday that the sloop, agreeable to your hopes in the letter now before me, left Fredericksburg immediately on my orders reaching Mr Reid. She should therefore arrive at Smithfield in good time and will contribute to your dispatching the *Cuninghame* within the limited time. Indeed I entertain little doubt of your accomplishing that defined point. One thing I am certain of: you will spare nothing in your power to further her dispatch.

Pray attend to my letter relative to Capt. Lindsay's return. The situation of the crop of tobacco is much the same as when I wrote you last, only we have had some heavy rain since and what is planted in the low grounds has suffered from the wet and the weeds and crop grass incommodes it. Dry weather with refreshing light showers at proper intervals will perfect a most enormous crop, greater I am persuaded by many than any which has been made for many years. The merchants on Potomac have lowered the price in the stores to 21s. 6d. currency, but we continue here still to give 25s. in discount goods and money, which price, as we are encumbered with new stores and the purchase on Rappahannock is in a great measure over, will continue to the end of the inspection. True, in the gross it is a losing market. However, I would flatter myself that Mr Reid's purchase and mine may turn out pretty reasonably considered with the other stores and other circumstances. Goods seem to be in very little demand this summer and our advance daily declines.

I am preparing the scheme for next spring. I shall adhere therein to the terms of the Association and in supplement order the pro-

hibited goods in the event of the Act of Parliament complained of being totally repealed.<sup>1</sup> No person this way objects to signing this Association and I think there is the greatest probability of its becoming general.

It will be well if the company sends this fall a complete assortment for Shockoe. Our next advices will put us on a certainty in this matter the moment they are received. Preparation must be made for them meanwhile. I wish you would write Mr Coutts and know what hopes there is of his moving.

To Mr David Walker, Merchant, Port Tobacco

Falmouth 11th July 1770

After some warm debates our original Associators gave the merchants an invitation to join them. Accordingly when we met at the Oyer Court, James Balfour desired that the merchants would assemble and consider the invitation. Then a rough draught of the Association was read. It underwent some considerable amendments until the one of which Mr Payne tells me he sent you a copy was agreed to. As it stands at present it will not be of great prejudice to the trading part of the Colony and you will observe an evident partiality in favour of Glasgow manufactures. It will I believe become general in this government and I wish those united associations of the different colonies may have the desired effect. If they have not such effect soon, trade will suffer very considerably. I hope in imitation of Virginia you will relax something in the terms of your non-importation agreement.<sup>2</sup> I am indeed surprised that Philadelphia, New York and Boston adhere to theirs so long. The shopkeeper or dry goods merchant must suffer greatly, especially if their stock in trade is small and they follow that business for a mere support. If their conduct is the result of choice it is patriotism indeed, but I apprehend it is otherwise: that they are obliged to comply with the popular clamour through the influences of some

<sup>1</sup> A new and more liberal plan for non-importation was adopted in the Virginia House of Burgesses on 22 June, 1770. Several changes were made in the list of articles enumerated for non-importation and a regulation was added to boycott importers who defied the association against the Revenue Act of 1767 (7 Geo. III, c.46)

<sup>2</sup> The Maryland non-importation agreement was more effective and wider than in Virginia. Schlesinger, *Colonial Merchants*, p.199



considerable men who are chiefly concerned in other branches of trade, which the Association does not hurt. Be that as it may, I am happy, as we must have joined in an association, that the terms we have agreed to are so favourable.

The last Oyer Court may be called a remarkable one from the Association formed there and from the time we passed before the business of exchange was settled. We were there no less than fourteen days. During the last eight days there was a hard struggle to fix the rate of exchange, the principal drawers stood out for 20 per cent and the moneyed men offered only 15 per cent of which they were the more tenacious as some business had been done by transient drawers through the first week on these terms. However, on Saturday, the last of June we brought it to a compromise and received  $17\frac{1}{2}$  per cent bills chiefly drawn on London. There appeared to be money sufficient for the value of bills for sale. Indeed a considerable sum had been limited to 15 and was carried away because bills could not be obtained on these terms. Thus our Exchange is emerging from the low state which a scarcity of money but more especially the price and great demand for country produce had thrown it. From the present prospect of the tobacco trade it may continue advancing to the par unless retarded by the lowness of exchange in the neighbouring provinces as we are not of sufficient consequence in the trade of this Continent as to fix the exchange for the whole. Should bills therefore continue selling in Maryland and Pennsylvania at 50 per cent I am afraid we shall not obtain more than 15 per cent or  $17\frac{1}{2}$  at most at the October Court.

Over the whole Colony there is a prospect of a very large crop of tobacco growing. Since it was planted we have had too much rain which has drowned some low ground tobacco and chokes much more with weeds. I apprehend a good deal will also receive a spot in the southerly part of this colony when the tobacco is more forward than here. However, should the weather continue dry with slight refreshing showers at proper intervals there will be a large crop housed next month. There was no great quantity of tobacco at Court for sale. Some of Lower James River was sold at 16s. bills but the greater part from that quarter and Rappahannock was carried home by the owners because there was no considerable buyers and they could not obtain 18s. stg. They purpose to ship it

rather than take less. About 100 hogsheads from Fredericksburg and Falmouth was sold at 19s. bills. At court we had advices of the sale at Glasgow to the French at 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. and as there is a certainty that their future price will be much lower, as there will be much more than a sufficiency of the crop to load the ships expected during this market, I think the buyer, with the bills or cash here, should fix his own terms. However, I can assure you 18s. stg. is now offered for our tobacco at this place which the merchants refuse. You are happy this year in being so late in fixing your market price as I think from the present appearances you will be able to make it on good terms.

The *Cuninghame* arrived at Hampton the 5th instant after a passage of 9 weeks and 2 days. The advices by her are consequently of an old date and are not material. She loads in James River and I hope will sail on or before the first of August. My last letters from Glasgow were received by the *Katie* 14 days ago and are dated the 8th May. They contain nothing which is material besides the sale to the French. The very discouraging accounts from Holland rather precipitated this sale but at any rate they durst not have kept off much longer on account of the large quantities of tobacco expected in June and July which would have thrown them entirely on the mercy of the French. Besides, considerable houses have sold all their tobacco sometime before to George Oswald and Co.<sup>1</sup> and others at the next French price and this tobacco no sooner began to arrive than it did immediate mischief.

To Mr John Turner

Falmouth 12th July 1770

Malcolm got down last night about 11 o'clock and handed me your letter this morning with the scheme for the Fauquier store for Spring 1771 which will be forwarded on Sunday against which time if any opportunity offers for this place endeavour to send your letter for the Company, as it is necessary it should go with the first copy of the Scheme. In that letter you must assign some reason for the highness of your last purchase. In their letter to me by the *Cuninghame* which I received last post they acknowledge the receipt

<sup>1</sup> Glasgow firm of tobacco and sugar importers. In the 1770s, headed by George Oswald (1735-1819) and his brother Alexander. See Devine, *Tobacco Lords*, p.182

of our states. The following is the paragraph which relates to yours:

'The Fauquier tobacco is again beyond all bounds at 19s. 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. which we cannot by any means understand. It is true the purchase is but trifling, being only 180 hogsheads, but the extraordinary expenses arising thereon can never bring it almost 40 per cent higher than yours. There must be some other cause lurking. Pray, is the store house properly secured? Has there been at no time goods found to be missing? Are they attentive in entering in their books every thing that is sold? Thus they write and you will please to examine into these particulars and give them a satisfactory answer; I hope your purchase this year will obviate these complaints. However, take notice to them of your conduct thus far as being dictated by the motive of enlarging the Trade. With this view you have been obliged to lower the usual price of goods and to expend a considerable sum of money at highest price for tobacco to engage a customer and advise them what prospect you have of succeeding.

We are quite idle here at present. Through the harvest no tobacco is brought to the warehouses but 25s. will be given to the end of the Inspection. As we agreed on when you were here, continue to make the best bargain you can. It was wise and prudent of the Dumfries merchants to reduce the price but it is a favourable circumstance to you, squaring exactly with the view of increasing your purchase. However, bear in mind that it will by no means answer to advance cash to transient people at 25s. Your plan is to engage a set of good customers who live convenient and who may deal considerably in future. To do this, spare no means in your power and you shall be supported in whatever measure you embrace for that end.

By first waggon brown sugar and molasses shall be sent. I would be glad to hear every week the situation of your crop.

To Mr Thomas Gordon<sup>1</sup>

Falmouth 23rd August 1770

I am favoured with yours of the 11th instant by Mr Dobbie who is the bearer hereof. I also acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 14th June and confess my fault in not answering it sooner.

<sup>1</sup> Factor of W. Cuninghame and Co. in Halifax County, Virginia

You have fixed on a place in Halifax County for the back store to be settled this fall under the direction of Mr Dobbie where I hope, through his knowledge of the business, care and assiduity joined to the countenance you are able to procure him from some of the leading men in the county, that trade will prosper. I am convinced Mr Dobbie will give you great satisfaction but allow me to beg that you may be pointed and particular in all your orders and instructions to him.

We have all great occasion to be frugal in the management of the different stores. There was a considerable loss on last year's purchase of tobacco and the present and succeeding ones for some years promise to be worse. Under this disagreeable situation of the trade, you have on Upper James River greatly the advantage over us on Rappahannock and Potomac in the quality of tobacco, as yours commands several markets when ours in general will only answer the French. As this is the case it places the company's conduct in a wise and proper light in fixing stores on James River, and they are very desirous that you and Rocky Ridge or Shockoe should do something considerable this fall. I hope the price in the country, from the great prospect for the crop and that being early also, will be much reduced. They will not certainly open with you at more than 18s. currency. The *Argyle* in all probability will be in James River about the October Court and I flatter myself there will be little difficulty in loading her in due time from the purchases of the different stores. Should any be wanted for all cash we must throw that purchase into your hands and Mr Chalmer's that you may buy at the warehouses from the planters and thereby contribute to increase your importance and interest amongst them. At all times when tobacco can be bought from the planter on the same terms as from the merchants a purchase from the first ought to be preferred. By the one you often engage an excellent customer for goods in future, by the other according to the old adage you lend a staff to break your own head. I shall be very happy in knowing what prospect you have of buying some of the principal crops brought to your warehouses. You have a large field before you, on which to raise your name high in the mercantile world. Advance boldly but let prudence be your guide. If the price of your tobacco is agreeable you must not on any account be stinted in money. This fall exchange

advances which gives some hope that ours at the General Court will be at par.

The *Cochrane*, now called the *Janet*, arrived at Urbanna the 20th. Her express reached me last night. I have no news by her, only an absolute certainty of the French price at the next sales falling to 2½d. The *Neptune* will bring the goods for James River, amongst which there will be a cargo for Shockoe or Rocky Ridge (for I intend, should we be prevented by Coutts from opening at the first place so early as we could wish, to open at the other provided a house could be rented. I am informed this may be done. However, keep this to your self).

There has hitherto been a prospect for a large crop this way. We have of late, and it promises to continue, a deal of wet weather which may hurt it.

To Capt. William Dunlop

Falmouth 27th August 1770

I am advised by Messrs. William Cuninghame and Company, Merchants in Glasgow, that they have written you to contract with some person at Newberry for the building of two ships for them of the dimensions which they have particularised to you. They seem very desirous to have the ships launched as early next summer as possibly can be done. I hope you have therefore been able to contract accordingly. I am further advised that Capt. Andrew Gibson goes to Newberry to superintend the building and in the event of his not reaching that place before your departure they have desired you to leave what agreements you make in consequence of their letter with a friend sealed up directed for Mr Gibson.

To enable me to correspond in a proper manner I must beg the favour of your advising me on receipt hereof your transactions with regard to the above, the character of the builder with whom you contract, the size of the ships contracted for, and the time and terms on which they are to be finished will be very agreeable to me. But I must desire in particular to be acquainted under whose care you have the packet containing the agreement of Capt. Gibson.

To Mr Andrew Chalmer

Falmouth 14th April 1771

I have not had the pleasure of hearing if you reached Richmond in safety but hope you did. By the *Ritchie*, arrived in this River last week from Glasgow, I have letters from the Company dated 9th January, these letters contain their general plan of shipping for the current purchase from which I observe you are to have the *Cochrane* and *Argyle* in James River. The former is to bring out the goods mentioned to arrive in this month. The other, it is proposed, shall leave Glasgow about the first of May with hands and materials for the two ships building at Boston and may arrive here early in July. From the burthen of these vessels you will infer the necessity of your exerting every endeavour to buy as large a quantity of tobacco as possible from the planter, by closely attending the warehouses and purchasing even with ready cash from good men where there is a probability of engaging their custom in future. Such a method has often succeeded here.

Advices by the *Ritchie* mention Glassford and Henderson<sup>1</sup> and some others having sold to the French at 2½d. and that the Alexanders had refused to take any more at that price, studying to reduce the price more and more in which there is too much reason to think they will succeed. It is therefore highly material how soon the *Cochrane* be dispatched on arrival and I cannot entertain the least doubt of this being done from the store collections as I apprehend you will be fully prepared ere she arrives. I am sorry your goods will be so late in coming. The company have come to the resolution, from a belief the Association would be altered at the December meeting, of sending the articles it prohibited us from importing. These from London were to be shipped by the *Royal Exchange*, Capt. Woodford. I wish they may prosecute this resolution as it must be an advantage to you to have an assortment of June goods.

As I have this evening received letters by the *Cochrane* I must give you joy of the arrival of your goods which I think is a very lucky

<sup>1</sup> Part of the great Glassford group of companies. Glassford and Henderson was the North Virginia (Rappahannock) part of the enterprise. As one of the 'big three' in the Glasgow tobacco trade, it was a major competitor of the Cuninghame firms.

circumstance. No doubt you have full advices from the Company by this ship. I need therefore only add at present that I hope she will be dispatched in three weeks from the store collections as I would not incline to purchase any tobacco with bills from the merchants for sometime.

To Mr William Henderson

Falmouth 14th April 1771

I observe from your advices you imagine the Company would, from the price of tobacco breaking above and below on James River at more than they expected, send only a second ship to that river for this crop. My last letter contains their general Plan of Shipping for the season and I am to inform you of the destinations for James River, that you may consult together and settle matters for their dispatch. The *Cochrane* is allotted to carry your goods and may probably arrive this month. The *Argyle*, it is proposed, shall leave Glasgow about the first of May with hands and materials for the two ships building at Boston from which she will proceed for your river and may arrive early in July. On calculating you will find the total quantity to be furnished from your stores will run within a few hogsheads of 1400. I apprehend the whole of this may be bought in the stores from the planter for goods and money without much pushing considering the largeness of the crop at market, at any rate before any purchase is made from the merchant with bills. Mr Gordon and Mr Chalmer must exert themselves in buying from the planter at the warehouses with money in their hands in order to engage custom hereafter. Should there still be a deficiency after they have done all they can there we must buy from the merchant. But the June Oyer Court will be soon enough to think of this as you must from your collections be fully prepared for the *Cochrane*. However, the situation of the ensuing crop must regulate us in a bill purchase, which must in the end amount to a considerable quantity as we shall fall greatly short on Rappahannock and Potomac.

The *Janet* sailed the 7th January for Bordeaux from which she comes to Rappahannock and the *Neptune* was to load about the first

of February with goods for the same place. We shall be pinched to give them dispatch from the collections as they are too close to one another. The *Cunninghame* it is proposed shall arrive in Potomac in April and the *Triton* via Rotterdam in May. I suppose they may be both in that river at one time and under the same circumstances as those in Rappahannock which might be in a great measure prevented by sending the *Janet* to Potomac.

Glassford and Henderson and some others have sold tobacco to the French at 2½d. and the Alexanders have since declined buying any more at that price. This is shocking news considering the prices we are giving here, viz. 18s. per hundred with a very large proportion of cash and I much question now if that price can be reduced for the remainder of the purchase although a new trial must be made for that salutary end. Are you not to fall in price on James River? Our sellers in the country this way are at present bare of tobacco, John Smith having in the month of February engaged upwards of 500 hogsheads which he is now shipping on board the *Trotman* for London at 17s. 3d. currency payable at the April Court.

My last advices from Philadelphia specify that Exchange was likely to continue from 167½ to 170 per cent through the summer. Will this, think you, have any weight on the rate of ours this Court? It certainly must and I flatter myself it will not be less than 25 per £100.

The spring has been hitherto favourable to the tobacco plants. Only for a day or two past the weather has been rather cold.

You may send me by first opportunity all the cotton you can spare. Take care that it is properly secured as what you sent last wanted greatly of the weight. I am this evening favoured by post with my letters per the *Cochrane*, Capt. Duthie, who I observe is arrived. He has made a fine voyage as he only left the country late in December and you have thereby the good fortune to receive your spring goods before we do, the *Neptune* being still out. As it is more than probable the *Cochrane* on her return home will be sent for a load of salt to Liverpool, which we are all in want of and which I am afraid we cannot get sooner than her return, and as you know the cargoes of tobacco are going to a falling market, you will no doubt give her great dispatch which I flatter myself can with ease be accomplished from the store collections.



To Mr Thomas Gordon

Falmouth 16th April 1771

I have not been favoured with any of yours since I had the pleasure of seeing you here. This evening my letters per the *Cochrane*, Capt. Duthie, came to hand by post. I am extremely glad he has arrived so timeously with your goods as I have been for some time dubious they would be quite late. I flatter myself your proportion will come to a ready sale and enable you to purchase with ease 500 hogsheads in the Petersburg store and from 100 to 200 in Halifax. Besides this ship you will have the *Argyle* in July and I am extremely desirous they both should be loaded from the store collections. If this can be effected by your constantly plying at the different warehouses and buying from the planters with cash, my inducement to prefer this method of supplying our deficiency of tobacco to any other is that you may have an opportunity of procuring a set of good customers. Pray, therefore, embrace the present time and try what you can do for this salutary end. Money may be had from Philadelphia should it be scarce or our exchange low at Court at this time. I do not entertain a doubt of your dispatching the *Cochrane* from your collections before the 10th May. But after your utmost endeavours have been used to buy both ships' loads in the stores, if we find there is still some wanting, it must be bought with bills. But it will be time enough to talk of this at the General Court and we must be regulated therein by occurrences. I shall therefore be glad you would write me frequently the situation of the coming crop and any other circumstance which may affect the market. As I expect the *Janet* and *Neptune* daily into Rappahannock I cannot take in Petersburg on the way to Court.

To Mr Andrew Chalmer

Falmouth 31st May 1771

By the *Cuninghame* arrived last Friday at Quantico I have letters from the Company dated the 4th April wherein Mr C. takes notice of a paragraph of a letter from William Henderson dated the 10th February advising he had been acquainted by you that Mr Stewart,

factor for the Donalds company,<sup>1</sup> was determined to serve them no longer when his time was out which was thought to expire next September. Mr Henderson adds: 'it will be extremely lucky if we could get him to take the charge for you at that place: Mr Stewart is represented as a very good sort of man; he would have a great advantage over a stranger at first opening'. In consequence of this intelligence, Mr Cuninghame agrees at once in Mr Henderson's opinion that the advantage to them would be immense and he thinks Mr Stewart should be engaged if he is clear of the Donalds.

If you remember you mentioned this matter to me when you were at Falmouth which I discouraged through the opinion I entertained of Mr Stewart's abilities in business, and from a recent transaction with Mr Turner, who I thought and do still think would answer better. At this time things at Fauquier Store are in a train for his leaving that place the first of September to take the charge at Rocky Ridge. This removal was just proposed to the Company by Mr Henderson and was contrary to my opinion, dreading the consequence to his present charge. It is now too late to retract what assurances I have given Mr Turner and the young man who is destined to succeed him with credit. Yet as the Company are of the above opinion with regard to Mr Stewart I must endeavour in the event of his taking the charge to make up with them the best way I can and I have to desire you will immediately on receipt hereof, after knowing Mr Stewart's character to be good, his abilities presumed to be equal to the charge and that he will be disengaged from the Donalds the first of September next, endeavour to extend a missive with him on the following terms -

The time contracted for to be five years during which and as long as he continues in their service he is to be debarred from all manner of trade whatever, directly or indirectly on his own account, or on any other account than his constituents whose business of every kind he is to execute to the utmost of his ability as directed from time to time. In consideration of which and his doing the duty of a Factor you must engage to give him such annual wages as you can agree, not exceeding £100 sterling. The three first years ought to be considerably under that sum as the trade during that period will not

<sup>1</sup> Probably T. and A. Donald and Co., a Glasgow tobacco firm with stores at Osborne and Richmond. PRO, T. 79/86/1-180

afford it. But you will be regulated in a great measure by the wages which he received at present which I may safely presume are less than £100 yearly. However, if you find his character good and that he is really clever in the business of a store you need not differ on the salary for the three first years if his demand does not exceed the above sum as such a character will be a great acquisition. All his expenses and charges must be born as usual by the Company.

In the event of your engaging him on these terms you may as above enter into a short missive, a more particular one to be extended at the June Court. That I might be on a certainty in this matter I send this by Martin and I beg you may dispatch him as soon as you can get matters concluded. I expect him back at farthest by Tuesday night. I should have wrote you some days ago but on Sunday there was such a fresh here as never happened before in the memory of any person. It damaged every hogshead of tobacco in Falmouth warehouse and all that was in one house at Dixon's, in whole about 800 hogsheads, a great part of which is carried down river. I had a large quantity of brown linen wet and all my iron work has suffered. This fresh has not only been a prejudice to the town of Falmouth but to the planters on the low grounds on the River and ruins by destroying the plants etc.

To Mr Andrew Chalmer

Falmouth 28th September 1771

Your favour of the 7th reached me only last post and your other letter of the 24th was delivered by the bearer day before yesterday in my absence.

On Wednesday by express from Capt. Duthie at Hampton I had the pleasure of receiving the Company's letters by that ship. She is to proceed round to Rappahannock for a load, where we are at this time totally unprepared for her. The *Janet* is also arrived with the Potomac goods. We shall be able with the <CA> purchase on that river to give her tolerable dispatch, that is, she may be clear for sea by the 10th or 15th October should tobacco come down briskly to the new Inspection.

When at Quantico last week settling with Capt. Simpson of the

*Venus*, I went over to Port Tobacco on a visit to Mr Walker. The last year's crops in Maryland have been very full and all of Alexander Cuninghame and Co. stores have made large collections, in all 2,300 hogsheads procured with half cash. On enquiry I found Mr Walker was of opinion 3 or 400 hogsheads were remaining in the merchant sellers' hands which they would dispose of at 12s. stg. with 4 per cent for cash = 12s. 6d. A purchase on these terms I apprehend would answer us when viewed with the prices we are likely to give in the stores in the ensuing inspection. I therefore desired him to sound the holders and if he found that quantity could be bought as above to run an express to Dumfries. To which place in expectation of receiving such advice I went on Thursday but I found no letter. I therefore concluded he must have been disappointed on trial. However, that I might on certainty I wrote him from that place and expect an answer here this evening, or tomorrow morning. Should it be favourable to my views, I purpose to send the *Cochrane* to Nansimond to be immediately loaded. Besides the lowness of the price I am induced to this from the consideration of the quiet succession of shipping we shall have this fall and winter. The *Neptune* got home the 19th July and was to go when discharged to Liverpool for a load of salt for Rappahannock as the *Cuninghame* on arrival was to do for James River. This ship you may expect early next month and I hope by the time she gets clear of her salt and stoneware you will from your collections be in a certain degree prepared for her, so that she may sail in November.

To Mr John Likely

Falmouth 6th October 1771

Before this time, I imagine Mr Turner has left you, and you are now manager of Fauquier Store. He showed me his advice and instructions for your conduct in this important charge which I much approve and desire you may be at pains to imprint the contents upon your memory that it may serve as a general rule for your future actions. You will also, as conveniency will admit, write your constituents, Messrs. William Cuninghame and Co. of the state of their business now under your direction, with your opinion of the

quantity of the ensuing purchase and the terms on which it may be made. At the same time transmit a copy of Mr Turner's instructions for their approbation which letter you will enclose to me . . .

Mr Turner's method in pricing goods will be a pattern for you in the present instance. At the same time weigh well the quality of the article and when you come to sell the same consider the ability of the person who is buying, and the prices your neighbour sells such goods at. Indeed you will do well to be at much pains to get acquainted with his transactions in these matters for your government as you must not, upon any account lose any of the present customers. I hope you will acquire more. The price of tobacco will open here at 18s. per hundred which it is the general opinion should only be engaged to the planters till Christmas. You will therefore give that price for whatever tobacco you can buy, but avoid engaging any rise or market and promising to give it after the 25th of December.

When any alteration occurs you shall be advised, meanwhile you will sound Mr Pickett and know his determination with regard to the prices. I daresay you will not desire to exceed the above, at which use your utmost endeavours to purchase all you can, and your influence in prevailing on the people to carry down their tobacco as soon as possible, as the ship *Janet* is now at Quantico waiting for a load. But this you may keep to yourself. Whatever engagements you make for money they shall be complied with on your giving timeous notice prior to the General Courts. At present I have only time to add that I hope you will behave in this charge as to merit the approbation of the Company.

To Mr John Turner

Falmouth 6th October 1771

Having extended a missive with you for the management of Messrs. William Cuninghame and Company's store, to be fixed at Rocky Ridge you have given up the charge of their store at Fauquier to Mr John Likely, and are on the way to open the Trade at the former place, I intend to give you a few hints of what the Company expects from you in that station and what may be your duty therein. This they have required from me, and it may be more

necessary as in all probability you will have no letter from them for some time.

By forming sundry settlements on James River your constituents are desirous of acquiring as large a share in the exportation of tobacco from that river as possible. They therefore expect the manager at each of these settlements to use the utmost of his vigilance and attention to promote their end by every prudent, legal and justifiable method in his power. As you were bred to business at Rocky Ridge, and as you have shown your capacity therein and given me much satisfaction by your operations at Fauquier store I hope you will soon answer their expectations.

The cargo of goods imported by the *Cochrane* and those articles which are still to arrive from London you will find a complete assortment for one year. As I imagine the price of goods is much changed, since you were acquainted on James River, you will do well before opening to gain what intelligence you can on this head by consulting with Mr Chalmer and otherwise. I believe the general advance runs from 65 to 75 per cent. The advance on goods, should be an object of great attention, but for the present you must be conformable to your neighbours, raising it with their concurrence. In future, as any circumstance will admit when you undertake to supply any person with goods at a certain advance, I would advise and require of you, where it is possible, that you would exchange a missive at agreement, specifying the advance to be paid on your invoices transmitted with the goods and terms of payment. In the months of June and December annually you will transmit schemes for your spring and fall cargoes. In making out these schemes the minutest articles must be particularly mentioned, that your intention may be fully known and the goods come according to your desire. The scheme for the cargo now arrived will in some measure regulate you on this head, and I shall deliver you with this copy of some directions I received from the Company for my government. Great care must be used in ordering goods so as never to have any considerable amount more than you can annually sell especially of such articles as may decay by lying. If it so happen that you are surprised with an overstock of such (and it is natural to think this may happen for a year or two) get clear of them on reasonable or even low terms to a good man, which is preferable to

keeping them on hand with a view of retailing them at higher profit: have also in view the changing of goods with the company's other stores.

The less money that is sunk in carrying on any trade so much is its benefit increased to the merchant. This you are fully sensible of but there is no acquiring an extensive influence without sinking a considerable sum in debts, and allow me to beg that you may be exceedingly cautious who you credit. Lay it down as an unvariable maxim to settle with every person once in the twelve months, taking bond where it is necessary and practicable.

To gain a tolerable footing, besides being well supplied with goods it will be necessary for you to have money at command, that you may attend at the warehouses and buy with cash in your hand from the planters. Those of them that are good may be thereby induced to take their goods from your store against next year's pay. For this end I have sent a bill to Philadelphia, dated the 25th September in favour of Messrs Willing and Morris for £425 stg. on your account and shall supply you with an immediate sum, and what others you may want until the Company authorise you to draw on them. This money must be well husbanded and judiciously laid out with a view of establishing a solid footing. I would not be against your advancing sums to procure good or safe men's custom but if the price of tobacco is moderate, of which we shall be able to judge at the General Court, you must endeavour to purchase and remit to the value of the money you expend.

Meanwhile, as the *Cuninghame* will arrive in James River next month with salt and earthenware from Liverpool, we shall be in want of tobacco for her load. You may therefore, considering the prices your neighbours give and on the terms they purchase, buy from the planters what tobacco you can. When you make purchases for part money and part goods you must no doubt be regulated in terms of the bargain by the custom of the place or the practice of your neighbours. But when you purchase for money let the price be fixed certain, refusing at all times to submit yourself to the rise on any pretend whatever. As the chief part of your purchase must be for cash, I should be glad how soon the market would open and the store price be ascertained. I cannot allow myself to think it will exceed last year's, whatever people may surmise; if so I

shall expect you will ship on board the *Cuninghame* one hundred hogsheads.

In extending your influence at Rocky Ridge and in conformity to the custom of James River you will be obliged to fix one or more stores in the Back Country. You must therefore be on the outlook for a proper place. Mr Chalmer has been on the enquiry this summer and seems to think Falling River in Bedford a good place for a settlement of which you will consult with him. I think it would be best to delay a settlement from our store till next fall when you can attend more to the same. In pitching a place for a Back Store much regard should be paid to the soil of the land in the neighbourhood and the circumstance of the people in a circle of twelve or fourteen miles as the influence of such a store seldom reaches farther and note that it would be improper to fix any store where a purchase of 300 hogsheads could not be made annually in a few years. When you make such a settlement keep it regularly fully supplied with goods and money and keep a strict eye over the management remembering you are the person immediately accountable to your constituents for the Good or Bad result thereof.

As soon as you have got the goods for sale you will write the company your sentiments of the Trade and the prospect that is then opening and you must at all times keep them duly advised giving them frequent and full advices by every opportunity how that business under your direction is going on, receipt and sales of goods, the situation of the crops of tobacco, the quantities at market, the prices of purchasers, in which be particular and full.

The situation of Richmond and Rocky Ridge will give you and Mr Chalmer an opportunity of being often together, which I think a happy circumstance, not doubting but the greatest harmony and friendship will continue to subsist twixt all the Company's factors especially amongst those who are near neighbours. This I make no doubt is also your desire. Meet therefore frequently to consult the situation of affairs and unitedly adopt such measures as may be for the best.

I need not recommend to you to live on good terms with your neighbours in town. That I think you will do. But allow me to say that too great an intimacy with any of them may be attended with



bad consequences. Secrecy in all our transactions of business, even to the most simple, is what I would strongly recommend.

On the whole in your Trade be generous, easy, affable and free to your customers, pointed and exact in fulfilling your engagements on even your most trivial promises. By these methods you will engage their esteem, regard and confidence and on this plan alone a large and extensive trade can be acquired and carried on, which you will study to do with the greatest frugality, both with regard to your expenses at home and abroad.

Tobacco as you well know is the chief aim of this concern. All other commodities such as wheat, corn, flour, hemp are but secondary and subservient objects to that article. To it therefore your endeavours are to be chiefly directed. In exporting your purchases take care you ship no stemmed or part stemmed tobacco. What you take of that quality change in the country for leaf of which in general you can get choice. Although, as above mentioned, your chief and constant view is to be to the purchasing of tobacco, yet it will be well if you buy as many of the other articles as you can find a profitable sale for in the country or from which you can supply your store or stores with West India goods.

In the month of September annually after inventorying you will transmit the Company a list of the assistants under your direction, the time they have served, with their characters and capacities in the most impartial manner. At the same time you will signify your opinion (which can then be reduced to a certainty) of the crop then taken off the ground with the quantity you will be able to buy through the Inspection for their government in furnishing shipping.

I understand one assistant is arrived for you; give at least twelve months notice when you want any more which will enable Mr Cuninghame to send those that there is a probability will answer.

That you may be successful in trade and enjoy a perfect state of health is my sincere wish.

To Mr William Cuninghame

Falmouth 8th October 1771

Messrs. William Cuninghame and Company, Merchants in Glasgow, having determined fixing a store at Culpepper Court-

house this fall, I hereby authorise and appoint you the manager thereof, not doubting but your conduct in this charge will be such as to justify me for doing so, and merit from them a present reward and future favour.

The more immediate motive for fixing this store was to be a check on Mr Lawson's transactions at his store in the little fork of Rappahannock and to prevent any other company occupying the situation at the Courthouse, which appears to your employers a suitable place for a settlement being in a good tobacco country and in the centre of the county and where they expect in time a purchase of 5, 6 nay 800 hogsheads, may be made with proper management. But in conducting the business they command that no endeavour shall be used in getting any person to deal there who are already customers to their Fredericksburg or Falmouth stores. They can gain no additional interest or influence by such but rather be the means of ruin to the planter on his being indebted at two places through the same concern, as he will frequently lose sight of the debt owing by him at one place, when he is running in debt at the other probably more than he is able to pay. Such therefore should rather be discouraged from dealing unless you find them determined on it, in which event let them deal then altogether. On the other hand, the utmost pains must be used in endeavouring to procure as many other customers as possible, to increase the Company's influence in the county and to enlarge the purchase on Rappahannock. But in carrying this into execution, they entreat it may be done with as little noise and parade as possible, for fear of alarming others, and putting them on the same scheme before the store is well established.

The scheme of goods made out for this settlement and which will be fully complied with from Fredericksburg and Falmouth will I think form a suitable and complete cargo for the whole season. If otherwise the deficiency will be immediately complied with on receiving your orders. You are pretty well acquainted with the general advance laid on goods here. In pricing the present ones you must have in view the prices your neighbours set at, and in regulating these prices great regard must be had to the quality of the goods. As you know goods of the same cost will not always bear the same advance, and some species of goods will bear more than others; the

cost therefore must not entirely govern you in the price, judge the quality therewith, and from thence conclude what they will bring.

In your sales bear in mind that every person ought not to have goods on the same terms. It would be unjust as well as imprudent that these people who pay money or tobacco, or those on whom you can depend will make regular payments once every year to the amount of their dealings should pay as much for goods as some others, for whom you may advance sums of money, or who it may be supposed cannot make regular payments. But you must take care that these prices be as little known as possible. As you are opening a new store it is in your power to begin trade on a proper footing which will make the conducting of it much easier; let me therefore desire you will take particular memorandum of your bargains with the people especially when you engage to supply any with goods at a certain advance. Exchange a missive with them on agreement specifying the advance to be paid on the invoices transmitted you with the goods and the terms of payment.

With regard to books, the same method that you have learned and which you know is used here I recommend to you. Keep your ledgers constantly up, posting each day's dealings at night or next morning if possible. Hereby you will always be ready to settle with your customers in a fair and distinct manner. You must be exceedingly cautious to whom you give credit, and your debtors do not do more than they are worth. You will soon get thoroughly acquainted with their circumstance, and must then act accordingly. Lay it down as an unvariable rule to settle with every person once in twelve months. When is necessary and prudent take bond. It often happens when a planter is largely in debt at settlement or when any considerable sum of money is advanced them they will offer a security on their estate which should at all times be accepted even from those in the best credit.

In conducting this business I hope you will give the people general satisfaction and that you may soon make it considerable. You shall be liberally supplied with goods and cash. The last must be laid out solely to engage custom. But you will not make the engagements to be paid at the General Court and give me timeous notice what money you may want prior to these courts. You may

depend on being supported in every prudent measure you embrace, and I daresay there will be no other.

Intimacies and much visiting at the planters' houses I strongly advise you against. It gives them a pretence of taking great liberties at the store where you must fix upon a proper policy to be observed invariably. Be apparently open in your carriage, free and affable in your behaviour, pointed and exact in fulfilling your contracts and promises, avoiding any pinching, squeezing and disputing with the planters as inconsistent with your plan of business. Merchants who practice these arts with that of studying their engagements or promises where they find their interest is affected can never in the smallest degree conciliate the affections or esteem of the people or gain their confidence.

Mr Stephens who keeps store for John Mitchell at the Courthouse will be your more immediate opponent. He has been some time settled there, and must be thoroughly acquainted with the people but he can be but indifferently supplied especially with money. He cannot therefore afford to give any considerable sum in crops. Hence I conclude his chief customers are those who have only a single hogshead or two to dispose of and who require all goods, and he may be induced to sell at a low advance. This must be particularly attended to and whatever the advance is you must not exceed for some time, as the contrary would tend to procure the store a bad name at first setting out and it might be difficult to regain it. On the contrary a good name at first setting out is easily acquired. People such as I have described who deal with him are commonly the customers by whom the greatest profit is made out. Care must be taken that each market they pay off the old and begin a new account.

Gaming is a practice much followed at Culpepper; shun all species of it yourself and answer no orders for such sums lost at play, knowing it to be such, the drawer cannot be compelled to pay you at Law.

The price of tobacco will open here at 18s. per hundred which is the general opinion should only be engaged to the planters until Christmas. Take the earliest opportunity of sounding Mr Stephens on this subject, and I daresay he will readily be conformable to the price below. However, it is not much to be minded what price he

gives, as at any rate he cannot buy much. You will give the above for whatever you can purchase but avoid engaging any rise or market and promising to give it after the 25th of December. When any alteration occurs here you shall be advised.

Write me frequently the manner you proceed, what sales and advance you have on goods.

As the houses will not be finished, you must be very watchful and guard against having anything stolen, sleeping constantly at home every night, and making your assistant if necessary lie in the outhouse.

To Mr William Henderson

Falmouth 11th March 1772

Under cover you have a copy of what I wrote you a few days ago accompanying the sundries therein mentioned by [blank] to the care of Love, Mitchell and Co. which I wish safe to hand. Since writing you, two posts before last, I have been favoured with yours. I am sorry the *Cuninghame* has been so long detained and am indeed much surprised, that you had not got your annual states ready to go by that opportunity; I hope by this time they are finished. Last night I had letters from the Company dated, 18th and 24th December by the *Thomas*. Our *Janet* from Potomac, which she left after my return from October Court, had got home in a passage of 24 days clear of insurance. The French by Messrs. Herries and Co.<sup>1</sup> came to market on the 30th November very unexpectedly at 2½d. when they purchased about 2,000 hogsheads and have stopped refusing above 1,000 more offered. They limited the delivery to those then in port and to arrive before the 1st January.

The Company sold 500 hogsheads in which they included the *Janet* cargo. I am happy she was in time for the delivery. This rise in price cannot be accounted for at Glasgow, however it has given fresh spirit to trade, and most people are of opinion that the price will still rise without giving the least reason for its doing so. In hopes that it may be so, the Company proposed that the *Ocean* shall sail from James River about the last of January with your goods and

<sup>1</sup> The London banking house of R. Herries and Co., headed by the expatriate Scot, Robert Herries (1730-1815). In 1772 he was agent for the Farmers General of the French Customs in Scotland

the *Venus* about the first of March, for Rappahannock and they wish that either or both may be pushed out with a cash purchase. You will therefore on receipt hereof endeavour to buy a quantity at that price. I am indeed of opinion that no person will accept thereof. However, make enquiry and advise what quantity there is for sale and the terms on which it could be bought.

Should such a purchase take place with you, the upper tobacco must be kept for next ship.

Notwithstanding of our former advices it would appear there must be full purchases made this year at all the settlements. The General Plan of Shipping for the year is not entirely fixed upon; it will be communicated by the *Ocean*. From what hints I have hereof it may be nearly as follows for James River:

	<i>Hogsheads</i>		
<i>Cuninghame</i> now in the country	500 furnishes	WH . . .	600
<i>Ocean</i> arrives in April	560 „	JG . . .	800
<i>Cuninghame</i> arrives in July or			
August	1,500 „	AC . . .	400
<i>Neptune</i> arrives in July or August	460 „	JT . . .	200
			2,000

Should the collections turn out as above quoted there will be no deficiency in these ships. However, as you will probably have the *Venus* or some other ship with your fall goods in September, half of her load must be procured from the old crop. To make these collections at your different settlements turn out as above stated. When you act under the former limitation of money, matters may be doubtful; however, I hope it may be accomplished with industry considering the sums of money already expended for the purpose of procuring a footing. This in a particular manner was the case last year at Petersburg and Richmond, but I must observe that until the price is established they cannot with propriety push for tobacco, I wish therefore how soon that matter be *established*. In the meantime, give them all notice of what may be expected from them during this purchase and likewise your opinion concerning their conduct. We are still deficient for the *Triton* but I hope we will accomplish it this month if the weather continues favourable.

To Mr John Turner

Falmouth 11th April 1772

I am favoured with yours of the 6th inst. and am sorry to hear of you being so unwell. You are of late much troubled with sickness; you should be particularly careful in not getting wet or catching cold. It will be so fortunate with you if the price of tobacco breaks at 20s. per hundred; it is undoubtedly its worth but I have been lately apprehensive it would be more.

The Company expects this year you are to purchase 200 hogsheads from the planters which I hope you will with ease accomplish. But the terms it can be done on is alarming, as I am much afraid it will answer to no European market. I have conjectured that the following may be nearly the state of your purchase on settling it in October, on the first day of which month, if I should neglect it hereafter, you are to take Inventory for this year:

Dr Messrs William Cuninghame & Co. in account Mr. John Turner			
To Balances due sundries arising as from sale of 1500 sterling goods at 70 per cent.			
By sundry goods per invoices including -			
Clear of Charges	£2,550	Charge of Importation @	
from £1,000 stg. Bills @		10 per cent	£3,300
20 per cent	1,200		
	<hr/>		
Deduct	3,750	By bills of exchange	1,000
Cost of 200 hogs-			
heads of tobacco			
@ £10 per			
hogshead	2,000		
Charges of Store etc.	350		
	<hr/>		
	2,350		
	<hr/>		
Off 65 per cent		466 13s. 4d.	
		<hr/>	
		933 6s. 8d.	
		<hr/>	
To amount of			
goods on hand	£1,500		
Off 5 per cent	75		
	<hr/>		
	1,425		
	<hr/>		
	Stg.	2,358 6s. 8d.	
		<hr/>	
To Crop tobacco			
200 hogsheads			
200.000	19s.	1,941 13s. 4d.	
		<hr/>	
		£4,300	£4,300

It appears by this state even allowing your goods sold to average 70 per cent, the price of tobacco is 20s. currency per hundred, and the trade charges as I have settled them, that your purchase will cost 19s. 5d. sterling. Let us next proceed to enquire what such tobacco will meet at home:

Suppose the contents of 1 hogshead	1,000			
off for loss of weight	30			
				970
Allowances 4 per cent	40			
4 per hogshead	4			
Draft	40	a/	£	5s. 10d.
	54			
	916	2½		9 10s. 10d.
			Cost gross produce	9 16s. 8d.
1,000 at 19s. 5d.	£ 9 14s. 2d.		Loss per hogshead	1 19s. 6d.
Freight at £6 import 2s.	1 12s.			
Insurance @ 2½ per cent	5s.			
Ordinary charge of Import	8s.			
	£11 16s. 2d.			£11 16s. 2d.

From this supposition of the sale in Glasgow I am led to conclude there will be a real loss of £400, on what tobacco you export this year, unless you sell more goods at a greater advance or use considerably less money, than I mentioned and £10 sterling per hogshead is a great deal but it appears to me that you will not be able to do with less for this year. I hope you will require no such sum in future. At the end of your first purchase the Company will have sunk in your store upwards of £2,000 which, with what you must sink next year, will I apprehend form a pretty good capital on which you will purchase the third year including your back store, 500 hogsheads. Great care must be taken in prosecuting the business that you are at no time too largely in advance.

You will as early now as convenient take a ride through your back countries preparatory to fixing a back store in the fall. On this head I have not much to add to what I have formerly mentioned to you. I would, everything considered, give the preference to fresh land, as the quality of tobacco must be greatly superior to that made on worn out grounds. You must also be on the outlook for a person



to take the charge. Houses on rent will answer better than to build for some time, until it is known if the trade turns out well. With regard to your own houses I cannot at this time say anything until we have an answer from the Company relative to Messrs. Donald's tenement which will be in June. Until then you must make the best shift you can. You will have no goods this spring. Those that are still unopened you should take from under the salt as there is some danger of receiving damage. The store I imagine will hold the greatest part. Say in your next what sum it would cost for the necessary houses wanted in the event of our bargaining with Hutchings.

We have not any news here; very little business done since the fall. The price of tobacco will I hope continue at 12s. in the stores, but it is scarce at present and I am afraid will continue so for some time through the scarcity of coin which will prevent the planters from coming to the warehouses.

To Mr William Henderson

Falmouth 21st April 1772

I am this evening favoured with yours of the 17th instant. I wrote you the 13th in which you were informed that Mr Newall's ride to the Maryland eastern shore, with regard to an immediate purchase of tobacco, was unsuccessful. Therefore I give you my opinion in full concerning the dispatch of the *Ocean*. I had this morning the pleasure of receiving by express from Hampton my letters by that ship and of being advised by John Ewing that he arrived the 16th after a passage of nine weeks of bad weather. He informs me you have written him. The *Ocean* is to lie at Brandon. I hope you will be enabled to give her tolerable dispatch from the store collections. In your letters from the Company by this ship you will have a plan of shipping for the season which is exactly agreeable to the sketch I gave you on the 11th March. They will also have written you fully what should be your conduct in loading this ship.

Money continues to be extremely scarce at Glasgow; to be sparing therefore of this valuable article must be a principal consideration in all our transactions: 'The purchases must be made on James River, including the drafts since September through the

current Inspection,<sup>1</sup> with the proportion of cash not exceeding one half of the value remitted'. This I am persuaded is more than you will require at Cabin Point, but I fancy is as little in the whole as will do in the present situation of the upper stores. On considering these matters I have to acquaint you that it will be imprudent to make any further cash purchase than is absolutely necessary for the sake of filling up our own ships with some degree of dispatch. They must be loaded on your river without any regard to the upper and lower tobacco, putting the store purchases on board as they are collected, and delaying to buy with money from the merchants until the last pinch. If no circumstance require a contrary conduct in this particular, for instance should there be more than 3s. difference in price betwixt the upper and lower tobacco, it would be the company's interest for you to buy an additional quantity of the last for dispatch of the shipping and that to lie by above or to sell in the country what can be spared. But of these matters we can discourse fully at Williamsburg. I hope then at present that we may, after mature deliberation, come to a proper conclusion.

Our price on Rappahannock and Potomac will I apprehend continue at 18s. although 20s. is given at Port Royal and in the lower parts of the Northern Neck. Exchange at Philadelphia rules from 60 to 62½. I have sent Mr Neilson there to return by the first of May with money for our bills if 65 can be procured. I own I have not the smallest idea that such a rate will be obtained but a stoppage of the regular course of post occasioned his journey.

To Mr J. Neilson

Falmouth 19th August 1772

I received yours of the 18th last evening. In obedience thereto sundry goods are sent you conform to the enclosed account. There were no limes or bread to be got; to make a tolerable cartload you will receive some more canvas and a box of writing paper.

<sup>1</sup> From 1730 and the passage of the Inspection Act, Virginia established public warehouses and required planters to transport their tobacco to them for inspection by paid officials. The inspectors were empowered to break open each hogshead, remove any trash and issue notes to the owner, specifying the weight and kind of tobacco. The purchaser was then able to present these 'crop notes' at the warehouse and obtain what he had bought

Last night on my return from Culpepper I received a letter from the Company by the *Ann*, dated the first of July, giving a most melancholy account of the stoppage of bankruptcy of a number of capital, considerable, and houses of less note in Britain which had taken its rise from the fall of Neale, James, Fordyce and Down, Eminent Bankers in London, who it is said stopped for £300,000 sterling and are declared bankrupts. Since which at least fifty houses have stopped in London, Edinburgh, Glasgow and other places through the country and all over the Island. And in all probability many more will be added, nobody knowing when the shock will end. The alarm was general and almost every person who had or has money lodged in a banking company or bankers' hands or are passed of their notes, ran to get the value in gold or silver believing everything was gone, which caused bankruptcies daily and God knows where it will end. Meanwhile amazement, terror, astonishment and suspicion was visible in every countenance. Such was the situation of the trading part of Great Britain which, in case you have had no letters by the *Ann*, I have thought proper to communicate to you. The shock must have been terrible; it will show who has and who has not a foundation and will make everyone be much more on their guard in what manner they trade beyond their bottom.<sup>1</sup>

Our Company have come to a fixed resolution to adopt a new plan in carrying on their business more frugally, not only in limiting us with regard to the drafts to be made on them, but also in the supplies of our goods and as they are morally certain there will be but few goods imported into the colony next year. I am desired to give the following immediate orders to each factor, that none may pretend ignorance: 'You will take good care of the goods on hand as we will send you very scanty supplies next year, that you may not only get clear of the old goods on hand, but have more dependance on receiving payment of your debts. And we further limit our factors at Rappahannock and Potomac, in drawing bills on us not to exceed from  $\frac{1}{3}$  to  $\frac{1}{4}$  part of the value remitted; and in the like manner our stores at Cabin Point and Petersburg, and those

<sup>1</sup> See R. Sheridan, 'The British Credit Crisis of 1772 and the American Colonies', *Journal of Economic History*, xx (1960), no.2, pp.155-86 for a discussion of the panic of 1772

depending on them, not to exceed from  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{3}$  and in like manner our stores at Shockoe and Rocky Ridge not to exceed from  $\frac{1}{3}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  of their remittances on any pretence.' I have also to desire and require that you will advise me the quantity of tobacco you think you will be able to purchase next crop so as I may send a full state thereof early in October to enable the Company to make up a General Plan of the shipping for the crop. After informing you of the foregoing gloomy and alarming state of affairs in Britain you need not be surprised when I add that the French purchased all the tobacco in port on Thursday and Friday the 25th and 26th June. Glassford and Henderson led the van as usual, much against the Company's inclination who seem persuaded that they would have got the farthing in 2 days.

To Mr Andrew Chalmer

Falmouth 19th August 1772

The *Ocean* and *Venus* were not arrived at the date of this letter and the Company had not received your states at which they were much displeas'd as will appear from the following paragraph: 'Not a scrape from Andrew Chalmer yet, no accounts from him to this day and our Books are still open and must remain so until we receive his state; we are surpris'd that you have not hitherto mentioned the reason and taken note of it. Mr Chalmer is in the certain knowledge of our great punctuality in balancing our Books and is therefore the more blameable in keeping us. But we are at a loss to know the cause of such negligence and disobedience of orders, which we cannot submit to. At the same time we do insist on knowing the real and true cause which we require you to inform us of on receipt of this that we may act accordingly'.

I am extremely sorry you should have given any cause for their displeasure and I hope when they received your state they would also receive a sufficient excuse for the late time it was forwarded. But you will please to send me by Martin the reasons in full of your being so late that I may transmit them. Hitherto I believe them to be sufficient and flatter myself your conduct in the management of the store will be approved of. This will soon be known from your

purchases; the present one I am afraid will give no favourable idea thereof but in the next you must do greatly.

We have rather too cold weather for the tobacco and the planters are complaining; however, I think there is a full crop depending.

Advise me what quantity of stem tobacco you have got for the *Ocean*, and at what price any could be purchased your way. Must the intelligence of the bankruptcy in Britain lessen the cash price of tobacco? Doubtless it will keep up the Rate of Exchange.

To Mr Thomas Gordon

Falmouth 19th August 1772

The Company had received your packet from Mr John White containing the annual accounts: 'The cost of the tobacco is amazingly high. They must lose four pounds sterling per hogshead which is horrid.' They still complain of your large advances and that they are ignorant what the sum really was which you advanced for Colonel Munford during next purchase. I hope your conduct will appear in a much more favourable light. At all times I beg you may pay a pointed obedience to their orders particularly to the foregoing one relative to the sum of money prescribed for the ensuing purchase which, should you receive the £1,000 from R. Munford in October, you can comply with easily. Maybe you will not require so much but it will enable you to extend your influence.

Pray advise me in return what quantity of stem tobacco you have got for the *Ocean* and as the prospect for next crop and these advices from Britain must reduce the cash price of your tobacco say what 100 hogsheads could be purchased at on your warehouses. Expecting to hear all your news.

To Mr Francis Hay

Falmouth 13th October 1772

The untimely death of Mr John Neilson makes a vacancy of a manager in one of Messrs. William Cuninghame and Company's

principal stores to fill up which I hereby appoint you, not doubting but your conduct therein will be satisfactory. Your predecessor was universally esteemed; he has left a fair character and is much lamented. The Company will feel his loss severely and let it be your study to obviate the weight of this fatal blow as much as possible. Success in this will reflect credit to your character in the mercantile world and procure you the favour and friendship of your constituents. That you may succeed is my earnest wish and for that end I shall subjoin a few thoughts on the situation of the business at Dumfries store and some directions which necessarily must be followed.

The store commenced in fall, 1764 under the direction of Mr Daniel Payne who gave up the charge thereof in fall, 1768 to Mr Neilson. Under their management a large share of the trade of the place has been secured but with a considerable expense of late years in money. Mr Neilson for the most part was overloaded with shipping which obliged him to push for tobacco, and to take it from his customers on unfavourable terms which will unavoidably be the consequence to any store lumbered with a quick succession of shipping. The quality of the tobacco hitherto on Potomac has been extremely mean, generally reckoned trash at the King's Scale in Britain, and I believe, especially of late, the Company have sustained a very considerable loss by their importation of tobacco from that River. However, now inspectors are appointed at Aquia and those at Dumfries and Quantico have seen their error and are become more attentive to their duty.

It would from this prospect be extremely cruel and hurtful to the Company to lose the footing they have gained; I hope your assiduity will prevent it.

A very material part of your immediate business is to settle the last years Books and to adjust to the satisfaction of the debtors their sundry accounts. After you have taken a new inventory of the goods and effects on hand or being satisfied that the one lately taken is just you will examine with minuteness that every transaction in the day book is posted to the proper account in the ledger; rectifying any error and supplying any omission. Then extend every account in the ledger which are unsettled in the same manner they were last year unless a contrary agreement is apparent to you.

The general price for tobacco during last purchase has been 20s. currency or 11s. sterling which must be allowed to all, unless a different price appears settled in the books or there is a positive agreement. Continue hereafter settling with each of your customers once every year, which settlement make in such a manner as it may be proved if occasion require.

The goods on hand are pretty considerable when those by the *Venus* are added thereto. They will make a complete assortment for the season. In pricing and selling those goods due regard must be paid to the price of those on hand. The general advance is about 100 per cent. From the late failures and unsettled state of credit in Britain, it is thought few goods will be imported into this colony for sometime. Your employers are fully determined to keep all their settlements bare. Take good care, therefore, of what are on hand and sell only to those whose credit is indisputably good. Much money, as I formerly observed, has been expended within these few years in carrying on the business at Dumfries; the circumstances of the times will not afford such an expenditure in future. Indeed it would be in some measure unnecessary as you will find the greatest number of your customers too much in debt. The company have therefore limited their factors on Rappahannock and Potomac not to exceed in drawing bills on them one fifth part of the value remitted, and that none shall be drawn from the October Court but what there is in absolute necessity to pay off prior engagements. Examine as quickly as possible the engagements Mr Neilson was under and advise me; I hope you will find little difficulty in procuring tobacco from those who are in debt on the customary terms of giving the market price as no certain one will be fixed, I believe, this fall.

The ship *Janet* may arrive some time in December to carry off your collections, when I think, if the weather is favourable this and next month, we shall be prepared for her.

Under the above limit Mr Neilson was of opinion he should purchase 750 hogsheads of which you will endeavour not to fall short. Be extremely particular in your agreements and engagements. When you undertake to supply any person with goods at a certain advance, pass a missive of agreement wherein specify that the advance is to be paid on the cost of the goods, as charged in the

invoices transmitted from your employers and mention the terms of payment.

In the months of June and November annually you will transmit schemes for the spring and fall cargoes. In making out these schemes the minutest article must be particularly mentioned that your intention may be fully known and the goods come according to your desire. Great care must be also used that none are ordered but what can be readily sold prior to the next importation, in such a manner that you may not have more than £1,000 value at the close of each purchase. The same method used by Mr Neilson in keeping the books may be observed by you, as I think you will find it clear, distinct and methodical, remembering that the cash account must be settled monthly, and the sum on hand at the respective periods noted in your principal ledger. In the first of September annually you are to take an exact Inventory of all the goods and effects under your management and to shut the old and begin a new set of Books, transmitting to your constituents as early as may be in your power thereafter and not later than the first day of February following, copy of said inventory, a list of outstanding debts due and by the store, account current founded thereon, also copy of your cash account, profit and loss, or Interest Account and that of charges of merchandise and any other paper, books or accounts which may be required.

In your trade be generous, easy, affable and free to your customers, pointed and exact in fulfilling your engagements or even your most trivial promises. By these means you will engage their esteem, regard and confidence and on this plan alone a large and extensive trade can be carried on. You will also study to live on good terms with your neighbours in town, but too great an intimacy with any of them may be attended with bad consequence.

Frugality or economy is generally the offspring of a sound judgement, despising the opinion and censure of the thoughtless part of the world. It is a virtue worthy of praise at all times, but more particularly during the present distressed situation of trade. The Company recommend it in the strongest manner in their letters by the *Ocean* and *Venus* just arrived, assuring one and all of their factors that not the smallest extravagance can or will be allowed off,



especially ordinary expenses, not necessarily incurred on their business. I beg, therefore, you will in these particulars comply pointedly with their commands, establishing a proper plan of economy and taking care it can be adhered to by your assistants. They will generally imitate the example set them by their principal. As you will attend constantly to business yourself, require a like application from them, and take care they at no time exceed in dealing in the store their annual salaries. They can have no further credit by the Company's express command. In the month of September yearly you will transmit the Company the names of the assistants under your directions, the time they have served, with their character and capacities in the most impartial manner. At the same time signify your opinion, which can then be reduced to a certainty, of the crop taken from the ground, with the quantity you will be able to buy through the Inspection for their government in furnishing shipping.

On the whole I hope your conduct will be such in this charge as do you credit. If at any time you want information or are at a loss in any particular, I shall be ready to give you my directions or advice. At present I shall only add and recommend to you in the warmest manner, method, exactness and secrecy in all your transactions.

To Mr Francis Hay

Falmouth 27th January 1773

When you went to live at Dumfries I required nothing of you but what was easily done, reasonable in itself and that I had the Company's express command for requiring. The situation of the business at this day proclaims in what manner you have complied with these directions and I must say now, as I told you at Falmouth, that the inattention you have paid to the business and the excessive gaming you have engaged in at various times evinces to me that you cannot with propriety be continued in the direction of the store. But, as I then told you, your contract with the company may be completed at some other settlement and your conduct hereafter shall be the test for future preferment. Indeed I expected to have

been informed on this head by your letter now before me. I would wish you to reconsider the matter as I am persuaded your continuing with the Company is the most eligible plan you can follow. You may do me the justice to believe that I advise you for the best and that it gives me much pain that the duty I owe to the Company makes it necessary to supersede you in the charge at Dumfries. I would willingly contribute all in my power that it may be no injury to your character in the mercantile world through such a desire. I herein take no particular notice of some exceptional expressions in your letter.

I have enclosed to you a letter from Mr Graham with a 4th, 5th and 6th bill of exchange. Before delivery you will take his obligation with security as he has proffered so that no damage shall accrue to the Company either by accepting or protesting any one of the six bills.

I am glad, no stone is to be left unturned to have the books settled by the end of the month; application will soon effect that desired end.

To Mr William Cuninghame

Falmouth 8th February 1773

This will be delivered to you by Mr Paton to whom I have given a copy of your Instructions on opening the store with some additional remarks for his conduct. Now which you will see. You will be very particular in the character and circumstances of your customers, on the list of debts you leave with him, and write him what other directions you think necessary which I may have omitted. I hope Mr Paton will be found adequate to the charge, and that the settlement may prove beneficial, which you know I have much at heart. Advise him strongly from forming acquaintance with the idle and profligate part of your county. Let business be followed through choice and it will become a pleasure. Any interval may be filled up much to his improvement by good authors who generally prove the best friends. After you have delivered everything in a proper manner to Mr Paton and introduced him as your successor to as many of the customers as you have an oppor-

tunity, you will come down here prepared to take the charge at Dumfries.

To Mr Robert Paton

Falmouth 8th February 1773

The foregoing is a copy of some instructions I gave Mr Cuninghame on his opening store at Culpepper Courthouse in the charge of which you are now to succeed him. . . . I mentioned to Mr Cuninghame that for the purpose of laying a foundation for an extensive purchase he would be liberally supplied with goods and money. The circumstances of the times make a restriction in that particular necessary. As we are expressly limited not to draw for more than one fifth part of the real cost of the tobacco to be purchased this year have this matter always in view. Consider attentively what quantity of tobacco may be bought and let the cash articles from this store not exceed the above proportion of the value. Goods to a large amount were sold during the course of last year but the advance was too low, and I find from an estimate thereof that they only netted  $65\frac{3}{4}$  per cent. This must be remedied and, as goods will soon be in demand, will be easily done. Cultivate an acquaintance with the characters and estates of the people in the neighbourhood and with whom you deal. Should you find any of the present debtors dubious (by this expression I mean in the present instance *worthless*) or more in debt than there is a probability of their paying, endeavour to give security by giving long credit and steer clear of such in future. No man, unless he has a clear and visible estate, must be credited with more than the value of their annual crops. Observe to give no credit to tradesmen or to overseers unless their employers become security for what they deal.

Confine your transactions to these who make crops of tobacco, which is the only payment that can be depended on, and even with these be as little in advance as possible. The value of your debts should not much exceed what may be thought next purchase will amount to.

I must recommend to you in the strongest terms to have your books constantly ready for settling with the customers; the oftner you settle so much the better. Never let the interval be greater than

the twelve months and take care that the settlement is made so as it may be proved if necessary: introduce the custom of taking bonds at settlement, even by sacrificing the interest if paid in twelve months after debt.

I have desired Mr Cuninghame to be full in his remarks on the list of debts and to give you any other necessary information about the business.

To Mr John Turner

Falmouth 18th March 1773

Last night on returning from Culpepper Court I was favoured with yours of the 10th inst., enclosing copy of account current for last purchase. You should have only deducted 5 per cent for damaged and unsaleable European goods, being £111 14s. 6d. This leaves a residue of £2,234 11s. 4d. which added to £822, the value of currency effects, reduced to sterling, makes a total amount of inventory of £3,062 11s. 4d. There is also an error in the list of debts.

These errors I have rectified in the annexed copy of your account current, by which you will find the tobacco costs 33s. 8d. per hundred = £2,449 15s. 2d. This is still excessive high, but as I apprehend it is a true state of the account, you will after examining every article of the Cr and Dr transmit a copy to the Company, apologising for the mistakes in the former ones sent by the *Cochrane* and *Betsey*. The reasons you assign for the high purchase may now be admitted; I wish it had been otherwise, and this in a certain degree must have been the case had part of the sum drawn at the November meeting been entered in the new books. It will now tend to make the current purchase on low terms. You act properly in endeavouring to make as large a collection as possible from your debts, for the limit in your drawing must not on any account be exceeded. Assiduity will in a short time procure you customers without advancing any money.

I have been so seldom at home this spring that my correspondence has not been regular, and I am afraid, it will continue so for some time longer, as the business at Dumfries is still far from being in proper order. The superseding of Mr Hay gave me much pain but

the duty due to the Company, in my opinion, made it necessary. He is an imprudent, thoughtless young man; his conduct at Dumfries soon became totally incompatible with business.

The history in short is this. For three weeks or a month on first going up he applied as necessary. When the merchants were at Williamsburg, having commenced an intimate acquaintance with R. Graham, he gave loose to dissipation. A purchase was made of a servant girl which he kept for sometime and gaming to excess soon became common. So much addicted was he to this vice that he has lost as I have been informed £60 at a sitting. About the middle of January, I found by the situation of the business, that he gave little or no application. This led to an enquiry of his conduct and the result was as you have been informed. However, thinking these vices might not be constitutional, and being desirous to save his character as much as I could, I informed him that he might continue with the Company at Petersburg or at Fredericksburg during the remainder of his contract, and that his future behaviour should be the test for any preferment. This he declined and has been weak enough to commence a suit in Prince William Court for damages. He also promised to make some reply to the advertisement it became necessary to insert on the occasion. If he does so it will still convince me more of his weakness, as I desired him to advertise himself, and when he declined doing so, showed him what I had written, to which he made no objection, and I think there is no expression that can be complained of.

We have the *Janet* at the mouth of Quantico Creek where she will meet with tolerable dispatch. There is no news here.

To Mr John Likely

Falmouth 2nd April 1773

There was no appearance of Lindsay on Thursday at the mouth of Quantico from which I dread the worst and desire you will forward to Dumfries on Monday every hogshead of tobacco you have on hand or can collect. On receipt hereof please to acquaint Mr R. Chichester that I shall be at Dumfries on Tuesday next where I shall expect to see him and Mr Brooke prepared to settle the affair in dispute. I have no trace rope or leading line. By letters

received last night from the Company I am informed of a very melancholy event, the death of Mr Alexander Cuninghame, which I feel most severely and which must be a great loss to this concern.<sup>1</sup> The Company's distress for money still increases: several capital houses have lately stopped payment in Amsterdam and London. These circumstances induce the Company to limit us further in our drafts and I am expressly required to draw no bills on them in April and that the total of those bills through the purchase shall not exceed twenty shillings sterling per hogshead. I have therefore to require you to be conformable to this regulation and to inform that I can pay none of your orders at the ensuing General Court. You will therefore do well in not drawing any.

To Mr Francis Hay

Falmouth 20th May 1773

You did right in writing the Company your opinion of Mr Craig and the application he gave to business, as it is necessary they should be acquainted with the conduct of all their assistants, and it was my express desire to you. In reply to this information the Company says if he does not give attention to business he must be dismissed and can any reasonable men blame them for this? I hope Mr Craig is fully sensible of former folly and I flatter myself will behave in a different manner hereafter so as to reflect credit to himself and these with whom he may be connected. I imagine Mr Cuninghame made Mr Craig acquainted with the Company's intentions for the best of purposes and I daresay he did not expect it would have been propagated through the town.

To Mr William Henderson

Falmouth 31st May 1773

The *Cuninghame*, Capt. Walter Buchanan, arrived of Hobbs Hole on Wednesday last. Under cover you will please receive sundry

<sup>1</sup> William's brother and managing partner of the Maryland firm of Alexander Cuninghame and Co., later Cuninghame, Findlay and Co.

letters which came by her for yourself, Mr Turner, Mr Gordon and Mr Kinnan, being copies of those you have already received by the *Cochrane*.

The *Cuninghame* will meet with dispatch at Hobbs Hole, but the *Neptune*, whom we may look for daily must lie until the whole of her load is collected from the planters, as we shall have very few hogsheads left after the *Cuninghame* is gone. The planters on the south side of the River demur very much at parting with their tobacco at 14s. per hundred, however, I flatter myself they will soon come to as the prospect for next crop is favourable and we have no cash buyers. Indeed that article, money, is fled from this part of the colony.

I hope the *Ocean* is ready for sea and that you are well advanced in loading the *Cochrane*. Push those ships as soon as you can that the produce of their cargo, may in some measure alleviate the Company's distress for the want of money. By the *Ocean* you will advise the Company, and desire each of the factors to do the same what you can furnish of this Inspection after completing the *Cochrane's* load for the fall shipping.

To Mr Thomas Gordon

Falmouth 31st May 1773

I hope and expect you have rendered the Company full and particular reasons for your advancing so very considerable in money, which far, very far, exceeds the limit prescribed by them. In August, 1771, we were charged to be extremely cautious in drawing bills, and to advance no money but for the immediate tobacco, which order they confirmed in every succeeding letter, to that of the 20th January when they make some remarks on the value of your bills from the preceeding October's Court, taxing the purchase of Petersburg store and its dependencies at 800 hogsheads to be made with a proportion of cash not exceeding one half of the value remitted, including those bills drawn from the October General Court. It appears from your account current you charge 613 hogsheads which tobacco may have cost you in the country £7,700 currency, or, at 20 per cent, £6,416 13s. 4d. sterling. Your

bills, as contained in the account amount to including the cash on hand:

The 10th September 1771	£8,087 18s. 5d.
from which deducting Stark's bill and the money on hand at last settlement there remains a balance of	195 17s. 5d.
	7,882 1s. od.

From this state it will appear you have exceeded the limit in bills, even allowing your purchase to cost the above sterling value, which it would not as part of the bills were sold at 25 per cent . . .

£4,673 14s. 4d.

Some time before last October Court if you remember, the Company directed that no bills should be drawn at that Court for the current purchase and as they depended their former limit would be adhered to of advancing no money but for the immediate tobacco, and not to exceed half the value of the remittances, they had reason to believe this might be easily complied with. It was in consequence thereof Mr Henderson desired you to enter the bills made at the November meeting in the old books. They amounted to £1,847 16s. 11d. and had they been all entered for the current purchase your bills would still have exceeded the limit by £2,825 17s. 5d. These are facts and if you reflect on them, with the ruined state of credit in Britain and the situation of the Company in consequence thereof, you will take in good part the severity of their letters for some time past. I hope they will have due effect in making you more attentive and cautious in future, and more particularly through the present purchase, the limit in bills for which was first fixed by the Company the first of July last, and of which I advised in a letter, dated the 19th August, not to exceed from  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the cost of Petersburg and its dependencies. Sometime thereafter they directed you not to exceed the minimum limit at 30s. sterling per hogshead on an average, on every hogshead of tobacco you purchased and shipped and supposing that the price in the summer would not exceed 16s. 2d. per hundred this limit must be adhered to in time coming until you receive contrary orders. They have also fully warned us of the consequence to ourselves, of



exceeding this limit, or disobeying their express orders. I shall be glad to hear by next post how much you think this restriction will decrease your purchase from 1,000 hogsheads which you formerly supposed it might amount to. As you can only draw for £1,500 even allowing the purchase to be 1,000 hogsheads, what would have been the consequence had the November bills been entered in the current year's books? I am afraid as you have already drawn for £700 for this purchase, that you will be much pinched to comply with the limit. Pray exert every nerve in collecting your debts either in money or tobacco, that you may be enabled to perform your engagements at the July meeting. Remember what few bills you do draw must be on Glasgow, as Messrs. Ross and Mill have declined negotiating these on London but on such terms as cannot be submitted to.

I hope by this time the *Ocean* is ready for sea and she being dispatched you will be able to start afresh loading the *Cochrane*. I shall be glad to know what quantity of tobacco you think you will have for the fall shipping.

To Mr John Turner, Manchester

Falmouth 1st June 1773

Since I had the pleasure of seeing you here the beginning of April I have been favoured with your letters of the 6th, 21st and 22nd of that month and 1st of May, which are now before me. Paul Kinnan told me of them only in Williamsburg but I have since received the whole. The waiting for this money kept me so long in town that it put it out of my power to take in Manchester in my way home. The Company's letters to you of the 6th February are full, particularly with regard to your advancing money during the present purchase in which they have confirmed the limit mentioned to Mr Henderson and me the 17th December at 40s. sterling for every hogshead you ship, warning us all of the consequence of exceeding the respective limitations. It was for us extremely fortunate that they accepted the November bills. Had they come back the consequence would have been dreadful. I hope in future they will never be in such a situation, by every factor acting pointedly to orders. Indeed if we do not, there must be an end of all business, as

they cannot be in any settled state of business at home or know what to depend on if we act at random forgetting orders and our promises on the back thereof. The letter I wrote you relative to the Company's contracted plan of carrying on business was dated the 19th August in which the limit as mentioned in their letter of the 1st July was contained. I hope the worst is now over; let it be all our cares to comply pointedly with the present limits and as you have already drawn for £300 for this purchase, which may be nearly the whole of that limit if the quantity is from 150 to 300 hogsheads pray exert yourself in a very particular manner to collect some of your debts which may answer your demands for the remainder of the inspection. It will be extremely dangerous to hazard the drawing of any bills in July. If you have any engagements then to discharge they must be fulfilled by your collecting of debts. What few bills you do draw must be passed on to Glasgow.

To Mr William Cuninghame, Merchant, Dumfries

Falmouth 23rd June 1773

— Yesterday on my return from Culpepper Court I was favoured with yours of the 20th and have sent over this morning to Caves to see the twenty hogsheads shipped. By your favour of the 18th, received on Sunday on getting up from Hobbs Hole, I observe the quantity of tobacco on board the *Venus*, and that you were afraid of falling 50 hogsheads short of the number allotted you. I am sorry for it, however I expect you may or will make up the whole from your collections this week; if you think otherwise advise immediately on receipt hereof, and I will ship some more. My former quota of 150 hogsheads are made up as follows:

21 Hogsheads	Boyds Hole	Nos	301 to 321 inclusive
20	„ Caves	322	to 341
29	„ Aquia	341	to 370
33	„ Quantico	371	to 403
47	„ Dumfries	404	to 450
<hr/>			
150			

These lists were complete except for that on Dumfries, in which

there is a blank of five hogsheads to be filled up with John Churchill's when picked. You will also please to attend that the light tobacco is all repriced. I propose being at Fauquier Court on Monday, when, if not before, the deficiency of the load will undoubtedly be made up. Meantime advise me what you really want, as I may procure it before then, and say who loads the *Alexandria*, and when she will sail.

I had letters last night from the Company by the *Bowman*, dated the 29th April, advising that the French agent had appeared at market a few days before, and offered 1 $\frac{7}{8}$ d. per pound for a small quantity actually arrived which the whole Trade without any hesitation accepted. They in return refused taking more than one third of the quantity of Maryland proffered and declined to purchase any kind to arrive at a future day. From these circumstances it is every persons' opinion that the next sale will be 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. It is so far lucky that you have fallen in price at Potomac to 12s. 6d. for were it otherwise they command that not a shilling in money shall be given at any store where the price is more. At the same time you will take notice and adhere to religiously, not to enter into any engagement whatever for the next crop, as the Company may not allow one shilling of bills to be drawn on them during next purchase. This notice they depend will be sustained by all their factors, as sufficiently early, and will prevent any altercation relative to prior engagement by which they suffered these two years past.

The schemes for the fall have undergone very considerable amputation and you may lay your account with having very few goods. Pray therefore take care of what is on hand; sell at profitable advance and only to those whose pay will be regular and can be depended on. Settle with the other part of your customers as speedily as you can, taking bonds for the balances with security, if necessary, on allowing time.

Credit is still in a shocking situation at home, and what will still distress the trading part of the nation more, is the appearance of an immediate war. It is generally believed that the Ayr Bank will again stop for good, which will involve the country in universal ruin.<sup>1</sup> We cannot from this prospect draw any bills in July and you

<sup>1</sup> Douglas, Heron and Co., the Ayr Bank, suspended payment on 25 June, 1772 and in August, 1773 gave up business

will see how absolutely necessary it is to procure payment of the £500 from Mr Powell and any other sums you can collect.

To Mr John Likely

Falmouth 19th July 1773

You will receive from the bearer a hogshead of West Indian rum and some other articles agreeable to the enclosed account. For Godsake take care of the rum and by no means let every person have the quantity they demand. This must serve you until late in the fall, which is more necessary, as, I find by looking into your currency account, that it already amounts to £400 and when the inspection of your tobacco and other charges are added it will be a sum equal to, if it does not exceed, the limit prescribed of twenty shillings sterling on each hogshead you purchase. And besides you want £150 to clear your engagements. This is really alarming; in what manner the money is to be paid I know not. The Company have expressly ordered that my draughts on them shall not exceed the above limit otherwise they shall be protested, and the drawer made liable for all damages. These orders and restrictions are final and made by people who are not children and will not be trifled with. I beg you may think seriously of this matter and, as your difficulties in money chiefly arise from your disposing too large a quantity of West India goods, check such sales and act with the greatest prudence and circumspection, in all your other transactions, avoiding to make any engagements for money for next purchase, agreeable to what I have already written you. At the same time I would not have your customers meet with any unnecessary bad treatment. On the contrary, I expect and require you will use all your influence and address to please. They have all had large sums at times and as they know the ability of the Company from long experience, they must impute the present situation of the trade to the real cause, the circumstances of the times, which are bad and, I am afraid, not at the worst.



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CORRESPONDENCE OF  
JAMES ROBINSON, WITH  
WILLIAM CUNINGHAME AND CO.  
IN GLASGOW, 1772-1777

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To Messrs William Cuninghame and Co., per the *Elizabeth*

Williamsburg 7th May 1772

I am this day favoured with yours of the 16th March by the *Kelly*, Capt. Clark. The *Cochrane* on arrival must come round the Rappahannock although as mentioned in my letter under date 27th last we are totally unprepared for her dispatch. As tobacco will duly come to the warehouses we shall send it as quickly as collected.

— Mr Gordon, who is now here, assures me he has fully informed you in his letters since the October General Court the cause of his drawing so very considerably on you at and since that Court, and also in a particular manner his motive for advancing the money to R. Munford. No money will be advanced by him hereafter on any terms but on receiving the immediate tobacco and not even then unless the price corresponds to prices given elsewhere and a promise of the planters' custom for goods. He was induced to pay the money for Munford from the tenor of your letter approving of his transaction with Coles, and the agreement was made before your regulation of August last reached me. Col. Munford appears very sensible of the favour. His crop of tobacco is of considerable quantity, being from 60 to 100 hogsheads and as good in quality as any inspected on Appomatox. He will deal to the amount of £200 sterling in goods annually. On looking over the list of debts owing at this store I find very large sums due by particular people arising from money advanced during last purchase, which, and the low rate goods are sold at, must in my opinion be the cause for the cost of that purchase turning out so immensely high.

Those debts would I am assured have been paid with tobacco of this Inspection had not the several floods last summer shortened the crops of the persons owing. Should the coming crop turn out well the whole will be discharged next year and a large collection made. On the whole I think you may depend your orders hereafter to Mr Gordon will be pointedly complied with.

Your letter to Mr Clark shall be forwarded after I have copied the same. It might probably been more eligible to have delayed building until summer 1774 but you are the best judges.

The merchants from different parts of the colony are not all come to town and although it is so late there is no business done. At this court I shall be obliged to pass bills on you to the amount of £1,500 for Falmouth store, £1,000 for Dumfries and £500 for Fredericksburg.

The price of tobacco in the stores on Appomatox will be fixed at 20s. but it is still doubtful what it may bring on upper James River. The *Ocean's* load, I understand, is to a few hogsheads secured. I hope she may therefore meet with dispatch but have no certainty on this head, Mr Henderson not being in town. You know also there is generally a disappointment in craft on James River.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co.

Falmouth 1st June 1772

Since writing you from Williamsburg by the *Elizabeth* to which I refer, and on the 24th ult., I was favoured with your letters by the *Cochrane* arrived at Hampton in 49 days from Gravesend. Capt. Duthie will have informed you of the very unjustifiable manner he was used by the commander of the *Glasgow* man o' war. Such conduct in his Majesty's servants should be enquired into. Capt. Duthie was to deliver the goods for James River and proceed round to Hobbs Hole where I have not yet heard of his arrival. He will not meet with dispatch in loading as upwards of one half of his load is to be collected from the planters.

Money was plenty at Court but we could not raise the Exchange. This in a great measure was occasioned by the greatest number of drawers taking money on their bills and delivering them at the

current exchange; which in fact is putting it entirely in the power of the buyers to fix any rate they please. The method of doing business at the General Courts is almost as vague as purchasing tobacco from the planter at an unknown market price or at a nominal one with the rise. This must be remedied, and some plan fallen upon to give the drawers who appear at Court greater weight. The large companies in Glasgow should have only one or two factors there, who should have the disposal of the whole bills passed on them, the back factors to postpone their engagements for money until after the courts in Williamsburg and make their payments at the stores. When these regulations take place the holder of a bill like the holder of any other article for sale may be able to command his own price. I beg your attention to this in a particular manner and your influence in having it directed by the several companies in Glasgow so that it may be given that no factor shall part with his bills in the vague manner as mentioned above.

The total amount of our drafts on you from court is very considerable but such is the overdone situation of the trade on every river in this colony that little tobacco can be bought without paying a great part money to the planter. After expending large sums on James River the collections will be much short of your expectation. At Rocky Ridge, Mr Turner cannot buy any tobacco without giving all cash. The Brunswick settlement, I believe, will never turn out considerable. However, as there is a prospect of the collection reaching 250 hogsheads in a year or two, it is probably as much as the generality of back stores purchase, or as could be done by changing the place. The two stores which are depending on Mr Gordon I hope will turn out to satisfaction. The flood last summer was a severe stroke on the Halifax one, whereby many sums of money advanced to be paid in the current collection will not be got.

So great is the demand for tobacco all over the colony arising from the number of ships employed in the trade, that the planter has been able to establish his own terms and to procure what part money he chooses, the merchants who have a quick succession of shipping being glad to get the tobacco in their hands on almost any terms.

I have not yet heard of the store price being fixed on Upper



James River. It was much dreaded at Williamsburg that the operations at the Hanover May Court would affect the purchase at Richmond and Rocky Ridge; they have had a dreadful effect on the prices in Fredericksburg and Falmouth. James Robb, on his return from that Court, offered publicly at the warehouses and at Culpepper Court House that he would give 20s. for all tobacco brought to him. When we got home from Williamsburg all the merchants of this town, in consequence of a previous meeting for that purpose, went to Fredericksburg to endeavour to persuade the other purchasers there to abide by the price of 18s. per hundred, to pay no regard to Mr Robb and to let him buy until he became sick of giving 20s. which it was thought would soon happen. In my opinion we ought to have succeeded here, but the merchants of Fredericksburg thought otherwise. Mr Henry Mitchell and Mr Glassell, are much piqued at the wanton manner Mr Robb has taken the lead, saying they could not support their engagements with the planters without giving them as much as they can procure in town. For instance, a valuable customer sends or has sent his crop to the warehouse which you make use of according to custom. What excuse would convert this man in only receiving eighteen shillings per hundred when a neighbour who sold to Mr Robb got twenty shillings? Thus the 20s. price is established on us here. I apprehend it will also reach to Potomac and it must be given for the whole year's purchase. I look upon this transaction of Mr Robb as one of the worst circumstances which ever happened to the Trade not only with regard to the price being too much but the after consequence. It has baffled entirely our endeavours in abolishing engaging the rise and market and will prevent the planters hereafter from coming to the warehouses in the fall of the year and from parting with their tobacco. He can say nothing on his own justification, only he could see no reason for 25s. being given for York River tobacco and only 18s. for Rappahannock. But I apprehend it was designed some time ago. I am afraid Mr Robb is calculated to be a prejudicial neighbour, opinionated to the highest degree, vain of his pretended knowledge of the trade, and over anxious to acquire a considerable share of the purchase made in Fredericksburg; in this instance he has imitated the conduct of the wretch who would set on fire his own sorry habitation that the flames might consume the more opulent dwelling

of his neighbour. In fact the comparison is good. Mr Robb can only make a small purchase and is not much affected by whatever terms is made upon, but his neighbours who make large ones, arising from debts sunk many years ago, are obliged to give his ruinous price.

Mr Hodge at the fair last week purchased and wanted to buy a considerable quantity of Rappahannock tobacco at 18s. currency. He paid ready bills at 20 per cent.

As Mr Stewart of London is dead we are informed Mr Bacon has contracted with government for the exportation of felons. We may not therefore be much troubled hereafter with Mr Hodge in his cash purchases but I have some doubt of his fixing a store in Fredericksburg. Messrs Payne and More want also to buy tobacco at 18s. for Gare and Fearon of London who have sent Capt. Benson in a small ship to this river with a view of gaining consignments.

There is little if any tobacco yet planted in those parts. The weather since the beginning of May has been dry and of late excessive hot. During such a long continuance of dry weather at this season I never heard less complaining about plants. I believe there is a sufficiency of them in the beds but the hot sun is burning them up and I really think if rain does not happen soon there will be but a small crop planted and the crop of wheat will fail, which is a most alarming circumstance as there is almost a famine in the back countries already for the want of Indian corn. However, I hope we shall have rain soon.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co. per the *Janet* and *Cochrane*

Falmouth 1st July 1772

On the 20th May, Mr Reid settled with Capt. John Wilson of the *Venus* and transmitted your Bill of Loading and Manifests for 481 hogsheads tobacco the amount of the cargo; 293 hogsheads, of which weighing 305.276 lbs were on the (CA) account, and 104 hogsheads, weighing 111.538 lbs., from Falmouth Store, as would appear from these manifests. I hope the ship by this time is arrived and you have received accordingly, and entered the amount to the

proper accounts, as also £109 11s. 8d. for craft hire and £24 4s. 5d. the value of Capt. Wilson's bill on you in my favour at sight to the credit of Falmouth Store. You have enclosed the second bill and duplicate of the Bill of Loading.

Since writing you the first of June nothing very material has occurred here. The price of tobacco in the stores at Rappahannock and Potomac is currently at 20s. The crop comes slowly to the warehouses, and the merchants are much pinched to dispatch their shipping. Indeed I am doubtful a considerable quantity of the last crop cannot be brought to the warehouses during this Inspection through real want of grain, and that we may not collect a sufficiency to load the *Ocean* on arrival. However, the new Inspection will commence prior thereto and as the old tobacco will be first inspected her load can all be as required.

I am advised that the price on James River is 22s. 6d. in general but that 25s. has been given and is still offered for the principle and best crops.

The price of Petersburg still continues at 20s. and the quality of the tobacco at these warehouses is looked upon this year to be equal if not superior to the Rocky Ridge inspection. The scarcity of grain in the upper counties on James River will also prevent much tobacco from coming to the warehouse. It is therefore to be feared it will be difficult to load the *Cunninghame* and *Neptune*. I have not yet heard of their arrival nor I am informed what preparations are made for their dispatch.

In consequence of Mr James Buchanan having informed Mr Chalmer that the Donald Company had given out any thought of selling their tenement in Rocky Ridge, I lately wrote Mr Henderson to endeavour to buy Hutching's lot, even by allowing an extra price, many being in quest of it and we may be disappointed of a house entirely. I apprehend Messrs Donald & Co. had no intention of selling when Mr Buchanan made the offer but should have been glad I heard from you concerning the matter, and in answer to my letter on that subject.

The month of June has been as favourable for planting tobacco as could be desired, being showery and wet at proper intervals. A considerable proportion of the crop was planted preceeding the 10th of the month but as the weather continued cold, in consequence

of the frequent rains, and as the plants were small, much was destroyed by the ground worm and other enemies. Last week there was fine, mild general rains and every person has finished planting. The weather is as yet rather too cold, but undoubtedly there is now a full crop in the hills through the whole colony.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co. per the *Ritchie*

Falmouth 11th July 1772

Under cover you have three schemes for goods wanted at your Falmouth, Fauquier and Culpepper settlements for Spring 1773. I verily believe the whole of the articles contained in each of these schemes are indispensibly necessary towards carrying on the business with credit to us and satisfaction to the customer. I beg if any amputation must still be made it may be from the different quantities and not the whole of any article.

The goods per the *Venus* were clear, particularly the Irish linens which constituted the better half of the cargo. They were much inferior at the prices to those on hand and the German Osaburgs imported last fall proved to be of a very indifferent quality. Let what is now ordered be of an even, white thread, compactly woven and free of lime, in each of which the last was faulty.

What sales we may have for this cargo of goods or the terms they may be sold on I know not, but it is to be feared the advance will be still farther reduced during the course of the next purchase. A Spirit of Trading has seized the Virginians and they generally on first opening store undersell continually at a low price until they impair the stock or experience convince them of their folly. There has been lately a new store opened in Fredericksburg by Hunter and Taliaferro and next December George Thornton and William Tripitt open there and at Falmouth. The operations of these stores I daresay will be prejudicial and will give us much trouble in endeavouring to retain our customers. That we may effect this you will please to take care the goods are the best of their kinds, of as much variety as the scheme will admit, and charged very reasonably.

We have still a continuation of fine suitable weather and I think it

is now beyond a doubt, there is a full crop of tobacco growing as well in Virginia as in Maryland. At present is the harvest of wheat, which is a good one and will yield abundantly, a very happy circumstance in that the scarcity of Indian corn has been severely felt since the month of March. This has obstructed and will prevent a considerable quantity of tobacco from coming to the warehouse during this Inspection. On the 6th inst. I drew on you in favour of James Somervell for £42 10s. 4d. and in favour of Hyndman and Lancaster for £40 both payable in London at 60% which please to honour and place to the debit of Falmouth store.

Exchange at Philadelphia has lately been as low as 57½. It is now on the advance and by my last advice 62½ was expected. This rate I think will not equal ours at the meeting in Williamsburg on the 20th of this month where I must pay the balance due for the tobacco shipped by the *Venus* and be obliged to draw on you for other accounts.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co. Original delivered by Capt. Elsbeck via London; copy per the *Jeanie*, Capt. Bogle.

Williamsburg 5th August 1772

Yesterday finished the contest for fixing the course of exchange when the purchasers of bills were obliged to come to our terms. After trying every means in their power to prevent 25 per cent being the price of bills I have the pleasure to inform you that rate is now established. During the course of the altercation several of the moneyed men entered into an agreement not to exceed 20 per cent and if bills could not be procured on those terms to convert their paper currency into specie and send to the northward. In consequence Joshua Stores and John Leitch departed from the others and set off on Monday evening for York where they proposed to embark in a boat for Baltimore with a considerable sum, said to be from £8 to £10,000. This had no other effect on the drawers than to cause an express being run to Philadelphia, by way of Port Tobacco and Baltimore, advising our friends to avail themselves of the same should they be applied to for bills. Even after this large sum is gone there is not a sufficiency of bills here for the money left.



To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co. per the *Nelly*, Capt. Brown;  
copy per the *Triton*.

Falmouth 22nd August 1772

There is, as you observe, little probability of such a flood as in May, 1771 happening in the memory of man. As Mr Allison is building a dwelling house betwixt your store and his, which will break the force of the force of the water and as the street scooped out by that flood is filled up with gravel and clay which will be more tenacious of its bed than sand, I think it may be needless to drive the breast work along the front of the store which you propose. Indeed in doing this I apprehend there would be some danger in undermining the foundation which is really bad, being laid at no great depth in the sand.

At the July meeting, Mr Henderson purchased, as he advised you, Hutching's tenement in Rocky Ridge for £550. This could not be delayed any longer as they declined renting and several had been making offers to buy. Had we been turned out we could not have procured any other situation at that place which would have answered.

It is certainly true that the large sums of money owing at Falmouth store and by the persons you have pointed out is an infinite loss to the settlement's endeavours. They have hitherto had but small effect as will appear from the ensuing list of balance in which you shall have remarks on the whole. I have never been able to adjust the account of the deceased Mr Mercer with his son James although I have pressed it frequently. He has formerly told me he would pay to Mercer's account and I have during the course of this summer received 3,000 lbs tobacco which is all the payment I can get this year. He is at present at Augusta Springs to return about the first of next month when I have his promise to settle the accounts and I hope they will be farther reduced in the course of next purchase. There is and has been for some time a suit depending against Robert Mackie.

The general orders relative to limiting your assistants in credit in the store to the amount of their annual appointments are issued. I think none of my present assistants will exceed their salary through choice and on this head I would remark that the limitation in some

instances may be attended with worse consequences than the loss of the debt entirely.

Tobacco at our Inspections has been I think extremely mean this year and a considerable part refused towards the close of the Inspection. I shall be glad that some of the Rappahannock would answer the purpose of wrappers in the French Manufactory. Probably what is made on Shenandoah Bottoms may be the kind, being generally leafy, by which I understand a large plant of thin substance. I do not know whether the quantity of the last crop exported may reach 50,000 hogsheads. Much has been kept from the warehouse through the scarcity of corn. The two Inspections at Fredericksburg fall 1,200 hogsheads short of last year; the two at Dumfries leak about the same number, and Aquia one half thereof, while we want here from 2 to 300 hogsheads. However there has been inspected at these seven Inspections about 11,000 hogsheads which is many more than what used to be taken from a middling crop, although 3,000 short of last year's quantity, one thousand of which I apprehend has been kept back by the severity of the spring and scarcity of corn. In place of having surplus from our collections on Potomac we shall barely be able to load the *Triton* and must fall from 150 to 200 hogsheads short of the *Ocean's* load on Rappahannock. Your expectations are disappointed here, but how much more so are they on James River where they want upwards of the *Neptune's* entire burthen. Indeed were it possible to send that ship home in saving terms, as the price is amazingly high at Rocky Ridge and Richmond, I should not be sorry for the shortness of the purchase at these two places, especially if the managers have done their duty.

I was afraid all along you had taxed Mr Chalmer too high. He is the most considerably deficient. There was little or no tobacco inspected at Byrd's and Shockoe warehouse till the spring and after the price broke so high as 25s. he became indifferent about purchasing. This, joined to the real difficulty of a purchase at that place, is what I believe he will urge for falling so much under your expectations.

Tuesday on my return from Culpepper Court your favour of the first of July came to hand. The melancholy account of the bankruptcies and unsettled situation of the trading people in Britain is



moving, and gives great concern to everybody here. The sudden transition from affluence to want must have had a mournful effect on the unhappy sufferers. I hope the alarm and its consequences subsided soon after the date of your letter.

Immediately on receipt of this letter I sent to Richmond and wrote your sundry Factors on James River an account thereof, giving them the general orders relative to goods and the limit on their draughts, also requiring that in due time that they advise the quantity of tobacco they think can be purchased at their respective settlements under the regulation which shall be noted to you on receipt.

Happy if this shock to credit has an effect to the advantage of the trade of this colony. If fewer goods are imported, fewer will trade on their own account and the advance of course may be increased. Very large importations have been made for a few years past both in Maryland and Virginia and at present I understand goods to a considerable amount, say £10,000, may be bought at Baltimore under prime cost. From thence they are poured into our back countries and although it be incredible yet it is true they are retailed at Winchester from 50 to 75 per cent, average about 60. This I hope will soon have an end and as the state of the trading affairs in Britain will bring fewer bills to market, the exchange I think must keep up, as there will also in all probability be fewer cash commissions. The price of tobacco I hope may be reduced so as to answer the sales in Europe.

The present crop it is thought will be a full one. To the southward it will be large; never was more suitable weather known than what we had through the months of June and July. Since August it has been rather dry and cold which occasioned complaints from the planters that their tobacco was stunted, eaten by the canker worm, fired, and did not grow kindly. The summer has I think in general been cool. The evenings and mornings are now unusually so at this season. However, there are partial rains from time to time particularly, a fine one on Monday in Culpepper and Fauquier which was of great service. The severity of the spring prevented much ground from being cleared, consequently there is little tobacco on new ground and peoples' feelings for the want of grain has enticed them to plant as much corn as possible, enlarging on their former

years' quantity. I would think therefore the crop of tobacco doesn't cover so much ground as it has done for some years past but as people are not over cropped it will be better tended, prove of a better quality, and probably be as large in quantity as the crop of 1770. However, at present, I only reckon on a full one.

There is no great quantity of tobacco in the merchants' hands for sale in this quarter. It has on Rappahannock been picked up by Payne's Warehouse for Dixon and Littledale of Whitehaven, 200 hogsheads at 18s. to 20s. currency, payable in October and upwards of 100 hogsheads by Mr Ward at 20s. in a month. This last gentleman is connected with a certain Mr Horner of Liverpool. He has seen the folly in selling goods so low as formerly and given place in that particular to the other new stores. He is now begun to be as extravagant in the price of tobacco for which he will suffer. When bankruptcies are occasioned from wilful misconduct, from conduct which evidently prejudices their neighbours, bankrupts cannot be much commiserated. On S. Potomac the Marylanders have given 16s. 8d. sterling bills, particularly T. Turner who manages for Bidgate and Barnes at Port Tobacco. These are enticing prices but unfortunately we had no tobacco to spare and could not embrace them.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co.

Falmouth 3rd September 1772

Please to receive under cover manifests for 201 hogsheads tobacco shipped on board the *Triton* to the credit of Falmouth store.

On the 25th and 27th ult. we had fine, mild general rains and, as the weather has been warmer since, it is of much service to the crop. Tobacco I think looks extremely well in our back countries. I am persuaded it will be much better in quality than last year's but a considerable part is later. At the same time I am of opinion it will all come to the house and that the crop will be at least a full one.

The *Neptune* arrived at Newport News the 20th August. You have very little tobacco on hand on James River, and in what manner she is to be loaded I know not. Mr Henderson set off on the 23rd for Nansimond to endeavour to charter her to Messrs John

Hamilton & Co.<sup>1</sup> who had advertised for a ship of that burthen and to whom we had spoken on the subject at Williamsburg. I wish he may succeed here for many reasons. If he fails she must be filled up with a cash purchase on extravagant terms, say from 13s. 9d. to 14s. sterling bills in October.

I may be mistaken, but at present I think you cannot depend on much more than 1,700 hogsheads from James River next purchase while your factors act under the restrictions in money matters as presented them. However, you will hear what they say themselves in due time. I mention my opinion now to intimate a desire that we may not be overloaded with shipping.

The quantity of stem tobacco from James River for the *Ocean* will be but small, it having been swept for leaf before contrary directions reached them. We are upwards of 150 hogsheads short of that ship's load which I think is to be ascribed to the quantity of tobacco kept from the warehouses through the causes formerly mentioned. To save money and purchasing at an enormous price I propose filling her up with tobacco of the new Inspection but of the last crop.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co.

Falmouth 1st October 1772

These few lines will convey you the melancholy and hurtful intelligence of the death of Mr John Neilson who died at Dumfries about half an hour after three on Tuesday morning the 29th ult. of a bilious or putrid fever and was interred the same evening. He was at the fair in Fredericksburg last week and went from here on Wednesday morning, the 23rd, in usual health, only a slight complaining of a cold occasioned by getting wet at London Court in August. He was seized on his way home with an excessive shivering, followed with the fever which was very violent attended with a constant vomiting in so much that no remedy that could be administered lay a moment on his stomach. Indeed the disease was too powerful for any medicine and he had little or no ease from the time he was seized, being delirious for the most part until the termination on the seventh day.

<sup>1</sup> Glasgow tobacco house with stores at Nansimond and Halifax. PRO, T. 79/18/1

This Dysentry or Flux has been very common about Dumfries this fall. A good many have died thereof. Mr Woodburn, one of your assistants at that place, having for some time been consumptive, was carried off the 5th September by a complication of disease.

Mr Neilson's death is a most severe stroke! In what manner the force thereof is to be obviated I cannot yet say. Allowing the method to be embraced you must still be very considerable sufferers. The last year's Books are to be settled and we may safely suppose in them are many accounts which he only could adjust in a proper manner and to the satisfaction of the debtor. Your loss is indeed great. Who will supply his place I know not but whoever that may be I am afraid he will fail much short of the deceased. I am too much affected to proceed on this subject or any other; at present I must therefore refer you to my next which will be as soon as any thing effectual can be determined on relative to filling up this vacancy.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co.

Falmouth 18 October 1772

When your letters of the 31st July by the *Ocean* and *Venus* reached Falmouth, I was attending Frederick Court. The *Ocean* arrived at Urbanna the 3rd inst. after a passage of eight weeks of indifferent weather, encountering a hurricane on the 31st August which did much hurt to the sails. The *Venus* arrived at Hampton the 5th. She would be detained to the 10th in landing goods for James River. Mr Craig writes me that she will meet with dispatch. Part of the *Ocean's* load is, as formerly mentioned, to be procured from the planter but I hope Capt. Ewing will not be long detained. He proceeds to London but the cargo will not be the best of your Rappahannock collections, our situation respecting the shipping through the summer has occasioned it to be much otherwise. There are fifty one hogsheads of stemmed tobacco on their way round from James River and Mr Reid has picked up some of that kind here.

After endeavouring to procure a person acquainted with the trade of Dumfries and whose character in business might be thought equal to the charge without effect, before your letters came to hand and after consulting maturely of the matter with Mr Reid, I came

to the resolution of sending for Mr Hay from Petersburg, and if his appearance, behaviour and knowledge of business and accounts prove to our liking we are determined to make choice of him. In these particulars he pleased. Of course, I have appointed him to the charge, and given him some instructions for his conduct therein agreeable to the enclosed copy which I hope you will approve of and confirm. Many difficulties occurred in supplying this unfortunate vacancy; no method proposed seemed more eligible than the one embraced. All of your assistants in the stores on Rappahannock or Potomac are too young or inexperienced for such a charge and to have moved a factor from any of your settlements would have hurt the place he moved from. Indeed Mr Dobbie only occurred in this view and I think him too easy in his temper to conduct a charge at Dumfries when example makes extravagance becoming.

I hope Mr Hay will prove a worthy successor to Mr Neilson, but time will determine thereon. Sometime before Mr Neilson's death he sold a piece of land on Aquia to George Brent for which he had procured a deed from John Carter in his own name, recorded in the General Court. This was to secure a debt due to you but not so considerable as the value of the land. He covenanted with Mr Brent to make him a deed this General Court when part of the money was to be paid. Now, as Carter has conveyed the land to Mr Neilson, I am told that his heir at law can only make a legal deed to Mr Brent. You will please therefore apply to Mr Walter Neilson for a power of attorney to authorize me or Mr Hay, to make and execute such a deed as will answer.

No care is too great in guarding against inconveniences by death and as no person can promise himself life permanent let a general instruction be given to your factors to take no instrument of writing in their own names without mentioning in your behalf. This is a very necessary lesson from the present instance.

This fall has proved a very favourable one. The later tobacco is all safely housed. As the summer has not been too wet the tobacco from the lower grounds is very considerable. The crop in the back countries is large but not so in the lower ones.

On the whole I think next exportation will run from 50 to 55,000 hogsheads of which your sundry settlements may purchase as follows:

	Total of collection	Rappahannock	Potomac	James River
<i>Falmouth, Fauquier &amp; Culpepper</i>	1,420	870	550	—
<i>Fredericksburg</i> , Mr Reid has wrote you 1,200 but I suppose	1,100	1,100	—	—
<i>Dumfries</i> , as mentioned by Mr Neilson	750	—	750	—
<i>Cabin Point, Brunswick and Granvill</i>	550	—	—	550
<i>Petersburg, Halifax and Mecklenburg</i> : Mr Gordon says you may expect 1,000 but I shall only count	880	—	—	880
<i>Rocky Ridge</i> : from the customers already secured 150 which may be increased	200	—	—	200
<i>Richmond</i> : I have had no calculation from Mr Chalmer but I suppose	350	—	—	350
Hogsheads	5,250	1,970	1,300	1,980

By this account it appears you will have 1,970 on Rappahannock, 1,300 in Potomac and 1,980 on James River, in all 5,250 hogsheads and I think you cannot safely send shipping for any more while your factors act under the regulations prescribed them in money. The Plan for the Shipping may run thus:

		Rappa- hannock	Potomac	James	
<i>Cochrane</i> via Havre de Grace arrives December		—	—	460	
<i>Janet</i> via France	do	—	390	—	
<i>Cunninghame</i> straight out	do	500	—	—	
<i>Neptune</i> goods out	April	—	—	460	
<i>Venus</i> ditto	ditto	—	450	—	
<i>Ocean</i> ditto London	"	560	—	—	
<i>Cochrane</i>	June	460	—	—	
<i>Cunninghame</i>	"	—	—	500	
<i>Neptune</i>	September	—	460	—	
<i>Venus</i>	"	450	—	—	
<i>Ocean</i>	"	—	—	560	
TOTAL		5,250	1,970	1,300	1,980

On this calculation I have depended that the *Triton* would not be returned and that the *Janet* would be withdrawn after accomplishing

another voyage. There will be no provision made for them but as mentioned above or for the two new ships you directed to be built at Boston. I am still in the dark whether Mr Clark has undertaken the building of these ships as he never wrote me, although I have required an answer since I forwarded your letter. Should they be on the stocks it would be needless to launch them till September 1773 so as to arrive here for the first of that year's crop and should the purchase exceed my calculations the excess will be wanted for their dispatch.

The price of tobacco is not broken in the stores. Those who sell their collections in the country talk of 12s. The factors are for not exceeding 20s. but in general the mentioning of any price is avoided. A delay in this matter until the transactions of the General Court are known may be attended with some advantage; I shall be extremely loathe to exceed the last mentioned price, but I am afraid it will be otherwise.

Money undoubtedly will be scarce. I am much concerned for the dismal situation of credit with you, the more so as I must draw at the October Court, it being impossible to collect debts speedily. Mr Payne has made a demand for £600 this Court and I believe Mr Neilson has a considerable sum owing for prior engagements and our Inspection is all due this General Court which in the whole is a large sum. However, you may depend not a shilling shall be drawn that can be avoided and that your limitation for next year shall be complied with having appointed to meet Mr Henderson at Richmond tomorrow.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co.

Falmouth 4th November 1772

On the 21st ult. I delivered your letter of the 30th July to Mr Andrew Chalmer and read to him that paragraph of yours to me being the reason of your orders to deprive him of the management of Richmond store that he might have an opportunity of acquitting himself of the sundry charges therein mentioned. However, he but slightly attempted any justification, only in the company he kept which he affirms to me no other than the merchants in town and saying if it was your pleasure he was willing to give up the charge

now or in September. The list of Balances, Inventory, and Account Current for last purchase was forwarded about the close of April to Williamsburg by a transient person. No second copy has hitherto been sent of these papers. Enclosed you have copy of his Account Current, and of the missive of agreement, which I received at Williamsburg in August.

I was in hopes Mr Chalmer's conduct would have turned out much better than you had represented it, and that we might have been justifiable continuing him in the direction, notwithstanding your positive commands to the contrary, but we could have no rule to judge by, only the state of the business, and I am sorry to say this view was very unfavourable. Can you believe there was not a single transaction posted into the ledger since the beginning of last purchase? Indeed there was no ledger formed. His excuse is that none of his assistants could post books free from error and that he had no time himself. This appeared a very insufficient excuse. Indeed I do not know what could be pled to extenuate such neglect and misconduct. From circumstances we were obliged to infer that Mr Chalmer was really incapable of the management. Society has rendered him unfit for application to business and on the contrary has given him a turn for dissipation. But in what manner to supply his place was not so easily determined. Mr William Mitchell is not disengaged from McCall and Henderson;<sup>1</sup> Mr Hay had taken the charge at Dumfries; to have moved Mr Horsburgh from Brunswick would have ruined that settlement, and we knew of no person that could be immediately procured.

I therefore proposed (and after considering thereof Mr Henderson came into the proposal) of breaking up the Granvill store, moving Mr Kinnon to Cabin Point and Mr Henderson to take the charge at Richmond. Accordingly, I intimated to Mr Chalmer that Mr Henderson would attend on Monday the 26th or Tuesday 27th to take inventory and receive the whole of your effects out of his hands; that he was immediately to transmit a copy of the papers that were said to be forwarded in April, and that he should post the ledger and have the accounts properly adjusted. After which, and on a settlement, a receipt or discharge should be granted him, in the meanwhile he continuing to be what service he could in the other

<sup>1</sup> Henderson, McCall and Co., a firm in the Glassford group of companies



business of the store. I cannot say in what manner you will approve of those changes; they are occasioned by invincible necessity and I hope will be considered as done for the best. The Granvill settlement was confined and in all probability never would have turned out considerable. Mr Kinnon is well acquainted with the customers at Cabin Point and will be able to carry on the business in the usual manner. Richmond is better adapted with regard to situation for the person who has the chief direction of your affairs than Cabin Point. The field of business is also more extensive and your share thereof may by proper industry be secured especially at this time, when Messrs Donalds have broken up their stores at that place and Rocky Ridge, with their dependancies, which was a great inducement to continue this settlement made by Mr Chalmer.

The expense he has been at in building without any authority was another. Richmond is from 40 to 45 miles distant from Cabin Point. It will be necessary that Mr Henderson should be frequently at that place through the winter to settle his accounts in a proper manner, and any disputed matter may be referred to him and discussed when he attends there. On the whole I think the change will be confirmed by you; it is not final until that time.

As Mr Henderson was to attend at Richmond to receive the charge from Mr Chalmer, I sent Mr Turner to Amherst to look into Mr Lampkin's management. Report says well of him and of the settlement; there is a considerable opening for enlarging the Trade at that place. At present, we therefore determine to forward the goods to him at all events. The distance from Richmond is 120 miles.

The general advance on goods on James River is raised by mutual agreement to 70 per cent; it is a pity it was not higher and I hope circumstances will soon occur to effect that.

In my letter of the 18th October I have reckoned the ensuing exportation to run from 50 to 55,000 hogsheads. Many seem to think it will be upwards of 60,000, however, I do not yet think the crop will exceed my major conjecture. No price is yet ascertained or offered to the planters. The quality of what is passed seems to be good, but the crop in general is later and there is no quantity as yet inspected at any warehouse.

In the plan I supposed for shipping I omitted to mention that we

must have a cargo of salt for Rappahannock and Potomac and that they want a like quantity on James River. You may probably substitute the ships which are to arrive here in June for that purpose. Let the salt for Rappahannock be the same in quality and quantity as what we had by the *Neptune*.

I am at length informed by a letter from Mr Anderson, Boston, that Mr Joseph Clark had wrote you that the proposals made to him were not agreeable. As he pays ready money for all the materials which must be laid in before winter goods would not suit him; he must also be supplied with money weekly to pay the workmen and timber merchants. Mr Anderson adds: 'his Character is now so well established among the Glasgow masters that he has the preference; he has now two ships on the stocks which I contracted with them for some time ago, one of them about the dimensions of your *Ocean* for Mr Kippen's Company<sup>1</sup> and the other a small vessel for the West India trade, both to be launched this fall. He has no other engagements at present but I expect orders every day from Glasgow to contract for more.'

The Rate of Exchange at Philadelphia is from 157½ to 159. What our rate may be at this meeting I know not; however I presume it will not be less than 25. I shall be obliged to draw on you more than I hoped or you expected.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co. per the *Bill*, Capt. Mudie

22nd November

On the 18th instant I was favoured with yours of the 21st August by the *George*, Capt. Coals. I am extremely sorry for your distresses in money matters occasioned by the continued peremptory demand of money for bonded debts and it gives me more pain than I have hitherto felt that the draughts on you from the Court will be so very considerable. I must value on you as follows: £1,200 for Dumfries store, £600 for Falmouth, £530 on (CA) account and £650 for Fredericksburg store, in all £3,000 sterling and I am well assured their draughts on James River will not be less than £5,000 more. I am sensible these draughts will add much to your distress; in what

<sup>1</sup> George Kippen and Co., with stores in Richmond, Manchester, Goochland, Albermarle, Cumberland, Buckingham and Amherst. PRO, A.O. 13/32, Folder K

manner they are to be paid I know not. However, I hope you will be able to give them customary honour depending that you shall not be put to the same inconvenience by your draughts hereafter.

The purchase comes on much earlier than formerly, the chief part being bought in the fall, and we have more engagements to fulfil at October Court than at any other. I would therefore flatter myself our bills on you will be very inconsiderable, from the January and April meetings. Certain it is your factors are instructed not to exceed in drawing on you the minimum proportions prescribed in your letters of the first of July.

I wish we had been able to have charter of the *Neptune*. Her load adds much to the value of our bills and I am afraid you cannot raise money from her cargo to answer them during this present purchase. Your directions with regard to letting the shipping lie for the collection shall be complied with. The last year's exportation from this colony exceeds every person's expectations running as follows:

Upper district of James River	21,733
Lower " " "	3,167
York River	2,634
Rappahannock River	14,549
S. Potomac	10,716
Bottoms from all rivers	6,409
	<hr/>
	65,208

The total amount of this exportation is at least 10,000 hogsheads more than I calculated upon. It is generally thought by the most considerable part of the merchants here that the present one will be as large, in which opinion I am induced to acquiesce. Nothing conclusive is yet done in fixing the Exchange.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co.

Falmouth 19th December 1772

Since writing you the 29th ult. from Williamsburg, to be forwarded by the first ship from James River, I have received your favours of the 14th September and [blank] October by the *Boyd* and *Cuninghame*.

Annexed to the copy of my last, I advised of having drawn on you the 2nd instant when at Dumfries in favour of:

John Riddle, payable Glasgow 60 days	£50 14s. 4d.
Reginald Grahame       "       "       "	100
To which list I have further to add viz:	
15th Dec.	
In favour of Capt. Robt. Knox, payable Glasgow	£62
"       "       "       "       "       "	18
"       Richard Henry Lee       "       London	80
	<hr/>
	310 14s. 4d.

All of these were on the (CA) Acct. and in part of the tobacco of that mark shipped you by the *Ocean*. There is still a balance due to be drawn for hereafter. I was induced to fall on this method of charging that tobacco to keep your importations of the old and new concerns clear, the whole of the ship's load being on account of the former, as will appear from the respective annual states to be transmitted next month.

I cannot keep expressing my continued uneasiness for your situation from the multiplicity of the draughts on you at the last meeting of the merchants in Williamsburg, which amounts to an enormous sum and which will become due at a time when you have little or no tobacco for sale. I have in a former letter advised the occasion of these draughts and shall only add on that head now as then that you shall not be burthened with such a load hereafter and that I hope your funds will be sufficient for their discharge.

The *Cochrane* after a very lucky passage arrived in James River the 29th ult. and Capt. Bolton came up to Williamsburg before I left that place. I hope she will meet with dispatch should the weather permit.

We have collected on Rappahannock a sufficiency for the *Cunninghame* but craft are not to be procured and the season of the year may obstruct her loading. I cannot therefore say when Capt. Buchanan may be ready for sea. I would flatter myself provision may be also made for the *Janet* on Potomac prior to her appearance, but this cannot be depended on as Mr Neilson's death is much felt. However we shall have some tobacco to spare on Rappahannock in

March, which shall be shipped round rather than purchased for all money. I am apprehensive the collection on Potomac may be short of what I calculated on the 18th October.

We have received our goods by the *Mary*, Capt. Roundtree in tolerable good order, and have entered them to your credit conform to the invoices received by the *Boyd*.

The bills for the value of the *Neptune's* cargo will add greatly to your distress and you will also lose money on the purchase but the only alternative which appeared to Mr Henderson, when he was disappointed in chartering, was to buy the tobacco.

Mr Chalmer was much too sanguine in his expectations from the Amherst settlement although by every account it may turn out well hereafter. With regard to the situation of the business there I refer you to the enclosed copy of a letter from Mr Turner. I have not yet been advised anything further from Mr Henderson of your affairs at Shockoe; states, I presume, for last purchase will in due time be forwarded. From them I am afraid you will have too much reason to say, it has proved a *black settlement* but I hope and depend things will now alter, and that in the end it may prove beneficial.

The present exportation has every appearance of being large. The Inspections at Fredericksburg and Falmouth are stopped for want of house room. Immediately on returning from Williamsburg there was a meeting of the most considerable of the merchants of these places to consider the price of tobacco. It was unanimously determined not to exceed 16s. 8d. per hundred till May fair next, at which rate we are taking in tobacco much to the dissatisfaction of the planters who are encouraged to expect more from the new settlers.

Hunters and Taliaferro, consist of Adam Hunter, now in Britain to fix a correspondence, two sons of the late William Hunter of Fredericksburg and a certain John Taliaferro, who lived sometime with Andrew Anderson. They all have estates in the neighbourhood. Mr James Hunter, one of the partners, fixed store here since the commencement of this Inspection.<sup>1</sup> With Mr Robb goods were bought at 40 per cent which he pretends to retail at 50 and gives 18s. for tobacco, half cash.

<sup>1</sup> For this firm see W. R. Coackley, 'The Two James Hunters of Fredericksburg: Patriots among the Virginia Scotch Merchants', *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, lvi (1948), pp.4-21

The merchants on James River determined at Court that the price of the upper tobacco should be 12s. and the lower 16s. 2d.

I think on the whole things begin to wear a better aspect than formerly.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co.

Falmouth 8th January 1773

Since writing you the 19th inst. of which the foregoing is copy, I received your letter of the 20th December by the *Phoenix*, Capt. Lamont. That ship was cast away the 19th December in a gale of wind about 15 leagues to the northward of the Cape, the vessel and most of the cargo lost, the people saved. By this unlucky circumstance your settlements on James River will be without rolls, with which it may be necessary to supply them by the spring shippings. Several of the bales of rolls imported by the *Boyd* into this river are damaged, not so much as to make an average loss. I am ignorant of the reason but I have long observed those goods are more subject to damage than any other; if it is sustained in the passage from Germany a different method of storing should be recommended.

By this opportunity you will receive scheme of goods for Falmouth, Fauquier and Culpepper stores for the fall of 1773. These schemes are made out in a dependance those for the spring will be complied with. Therefore should a partial shipping take place in the spring, it will be absolutely necessary the residue is sent in the fall. The whole will not make a large importation and what we cannot do without, especially the woollens of the articles wrote for, of which we are very bare at the foregoing settlements.

With regard to the Dumfries scheme 2nd copy of which you will also herewith receive I cannot say anything with certainty. Only in my own opinion it is rather too big for the situation of the business there and the present times, of this you will be the judge when the annual states are furnished which I hope will be ready for forward in all this month, Mr Hay advising me that most of the heavy accounts are settled.

The fall has been favourable for bringing tobacco to the warehouses and the progress of the Inspection at all the upper warehouses

served more and more to strengthen the opinion of a large crop. The price on upper James River was at the beginning of the Inspection fixed by Mr James Donald<sup>1</sup> at 20s. certain, which he was induced to give by not being able to procure any satisfactory account from his neighbours of what they intended.

This has obliged them at Rocky Ridge and Shockoe to give the same, and is an instance of the pernicious consequence of misunderstandings or jealousy amongst purchasers. At the same time his motive was not good, and I think his conduct imprudent. However it was hoped every person would now fall to 18s., the concerted price at the meeting in Williamsburg. There is but little tobacco inspected at Richmond any year until the summer season.

Mr Henderson in his letter of the 16th ult. gives me an account of Mr Chalmer's behaviour in no way satisfactory. The balances for 1771 were just entered into the ledger for last year and two or three accounts raised. It is with difficulty he can be kept employed. This will not serve to remove the bad impression his former conduct has made on you. I am sorry for it; if he had any sense of honour he would prior to every consideration get the business into proper order which is made otherwise by his negligence. Notwithstanding the failure on his part in fulfilling the contract of agreement for the change at Richmond it seems he is affronted at Mr Henderson's refusing a draught for last year's stipulated wages and has been making out a power of attorney for his brother to commence suit against you for the same. This may lead to a scrutiny into his conduct in that station which it is apparent will not tend to his advantage in any one respect.

I have no particular information of the *Cochrane's* progress in loading but expect she will be filled up before long from the different store collections. There will not be so great a quantity of lower tobacco as I could wish; the greater part will be from Petersburg.

The winter hitherto has been mild; we have indeed been blessed with weather in the end of December much beyond expectation and been able to ship off the *Cunninghame's* tobacco. This I hope is a presage of a happy voyage and that she may arrive to the first

<sup>1</sup> Of the Glasgow tobacco house of James and Robert Donald with stores in Chesterfield County and Richmond, Virginia. PRO, T. 79/123, pp.40-41, no.65

spring sales, the produce of her cargo serving in some measure to alleviate distresses for many.

The *Boyd's* load is by exchanging freight made up by Messrs Dunlop, Mitchell and McCourt. James Ritchie and Co.<sup>1</sup> fix at Port Royal next spring in Mr Gilchrist's houses under the direction of Mr William Wardrop, at least they have taken the houses for that purpose. Mr Anderson of that concern bought at Williamsburg a quantity of old tobacco from Mr Gilchrist at 12s. 6d. stg. payable in March. This is all the considerable cash purchase we have had here this fall. The planters are loathe to part with their tobacco at 16s. 8d. but that price must go down.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co.

Falmouth 21st February 1773

Since writing you by the *Cuninghame* I have not been favoured with any of yours. That ship was run aground the 15th January by the unskillfulness of the pilot on Punch Bowl Point. However I have the pleasure of being informed by Capt. Buchanan in a letter of the 22nd off Cape Henry that he had got the ship that length in good condition, sound and tight, and to all appearance had suffered no damage which, as he had then a fine wind W.N.W, I hope long before this reaches you will be found verified.

This accompanies the annual papers and states for Falmouth, Fauquier and Culpepper stores for the purchase of 1772. That I may overtake this opportunity of the *Jeanie*, Capt. Steel, I have no time to make any remarks. This I must reserve for the subject of a letter with the second copy.

The Dumfries accounts are not yet ready. In place of Mr Hay's giving application to business, he engaged in the dissipation of the town, going into excessive gaming at various times. This behaviour convinced me, that he could not with propriety be continued in the direction of the store. I have therefore been under the painful necessity of superseding him and appointing Mr William Cuninghame his successor. This took place last Monday; I have been at Dumfries ever since, and am excessively sorry the writing business

<sup>1</sup> Glasgow firm with stores at Aquia, Fredericksburg, Dumfries and Hobbs Hole. PRO, T. 79/24, no.2



there is so much behind and you must have lost custom considerably during the fall. We have conferred the charge of Culpepper on Mr Robert Paton.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co.

Falmouth 26th February 1773

Annexed is copy of what I wrote you the 21st inst. by the *Jeanie*, Capt. Steel, when I transmitted the annual papers and states for Falmouth, Fauquier and Culpepper stores for last purchase. This accompanies a second copy of the same.

I have charged you in account current for Falmouth store, 912 hogsheads of tobacco, 953,416 lbs at 13s. 4d. per hundred, = £6,355.8.4 which balances the account and which I hope you will find justly stated. To the list of outstanding debts I have subjoined remarks on each debt. The total amount still exceeds what it was the foregoing year ensuing principally from the amount of the cargo of goods imported for Mr John Newell which are not paid. The lowness of the advance at which goods were selling in Fredericksburg during the course of last year induced him to keep them up with a view of retailing them for higher profit. The debt is undoubtedly safe, and I expect will be much reduced prior to September next. I shall use my utmost endeavours to look after and collect the many overgrown debts apparent in this list; if it were possible I could apply more time in that measure it would have more effect but I have been prevented therein hitherto by other business. However this must be remedied and I assure you it cannot admit of long delay. You will observe many of the debts where names you pointed out in your letter of the 30th April are in suit or due on judgement; money for these can rarely be got without the executive power of the law. The others have promised to reduce their debts considerably this summer, but I am afraid those promises like many former ones will prove vain. Where this is the case I shall commence suits if prudent to do so. At any rate I am abundantly sensible the large debts must be reduced as they are evidently a very great prejudice to the settlement; however, this will require time and perseverance in collection and to make it effectual few goods must

be ordered for some years, acting with constancy until the amount of those on hand at inventory does not exceed in value £1,500 stg. If this can be done and the quantity of the purchase not decreased from 900 hogsheads it will prove very beneficial but it will require the whole of a man's study and that no other branch of business call of his attention therefrom.

This plan or something like it must be adhered to as well at Fredericksburg and Dumfries as at Falmouth.

In the account current for Fauquier store you are charged with 342 hogsheads, 381,393 lbs tobacco at 15s. 6d. = £2,954 16s. 1d. This purchase still continues to be higher than it should be, it may be accounted for as formerly: that is, the very large sum of money expended therein. This I was obliged to tolerate last year by its being the first of a new manager. During that time and the way the trade was circumstanced any other conduct I think would have been dangerous and imprudent. But having held up to Mr Likeley the great contrast in the price of the two stores purchases, he is directed as things of absolute necessity to sell goods higher, to advance less cash not exceeding £600 stg. in the present purchase, to reduce the amount of debts, to bond such as cannot be paid this year and to procure security for dubious ones. At the same time I have observed while he is studying to accomplish these desired requisites, his greatest attention must be executed to retain those who are good and profitable of the present customers; to enlarge the purchase and to carry on the Trade with the greatest frugality, telling him that at no time the debt there should exceed £5,000, even when a purchase of 400 hogsheads is expected. The greater number of hands those debts are in, so much the better, being far from approving what cannot be justified: large debts owing by a few and lying over from year to year. I hope if these points are attended to properly by Mr Likely (of which I have no doubt), this store may prove very advantageous. On a scrutiny of the former list of outstanding debts I found many ranked good where the debtor had no visible estate. These are this year placed as they ought in the dubious column.

The small purchase of 33,311 lbs tobacco at Culpepper store cost £656 19s. 9d. stg. when the common deduction of the debts and goods on hand is made. It must be owned the purchase cannot afford that; the half of the debts should be deducted as will appear

to you by an estimate of the net average advance at which the goods have been sold, viz.  $65\frac{3}{4}$  per cent. Hence I am of opinion that rate only should have been taken off the currency debts but having no instructions for that purpose I have sent the account in the usual form leaving you to make that alteration if you see cause.

I have advised you that I have been obliged to move Mr Cuninghame to Dumfries and to appoint Mr Robert Paton to succeed him at Culpepper. This in some measure will retard the extending the purchase at the last settlement. However I flatter myself Mr Paton will prove adequate to the charge. On the 18th January I entered into a missive with him for that purpose for five years and three months, after completing his present indenture, to begin and commence on the 15th June 1774 and end on the 10th September 1779. It is in the usual form and the wages sixty pounds sterling annually. I have furnished him with copy of instructions given Mr Cuninghame at his opening store wherein your notice of fixing a store at this place and expectation therefrom are mentioned with the common and necessary rules prescribed your factors for their conduct. To these I have added the restriction we are under with regard to money, desiring him to have this matter always in view, to consider attentively what quantity of tobacco may be bought and that the currency articles and money from Falmouth store do not exceed the above proportion of the value; to raise the advance on goods as they will soon be scarce and were sold too low last year; to cultivate an acquaintance with the characters and estates of the people in the neighbourhood who have or may have dealings at the store; to endeavour to procure security from any of the present debtors who may be dubious, worthless, or more in debt than there is a probability of their paying; to steer clear of such in future; to credit no man with more than the supposed value of their annual crop unless he has a visible and clear estate; to give no credit to tradesmen or overseers unless their employers become security for what they deal; to confine his transactions to those who make crops of tobacco the only payment which can be depended on and even with those to be as little in advance as possible, as the value of the debts should at no annual settlement much exceed what it may be thought will be the amount of next purchase. Those directions I depend Mr Paton will fall on and with assiduity they will tend to

place the store on a proper footing from which you may in time reap benefit.

The whole of last year's purchase from Falmouth store and its dependencies is 1,274 hogsheads, 1,368,120 lbs tobacco and the average cost is 14s. 6 $\frac{7}{8}$ d. = £9,967 4s. 2d. This average price, allowing one half to be deducted from the debts at Culpepper and provided I have not made any omission in the Falmouth store account which I cannot discover, is I think everything considered, not to be complained of. However I am sensible you must lose money even by this importation.

When I wrote you the 18th October of Mr Hay's succeeding the deceased Mr John Neilson I little thought I should have so soon occasion to say I have been under the painful necessity of superseding him. A great character was given me of Mr Hay's ability in business and attention thereto which from the principles he advanced here and the manner he talked of conducting the charge at Dumfries, on being told of the evil customs of the place, I thought was true and real. Indeed, for some short time at his first going to Dumfries he applied constantly and from his letters, and from the care he used in staying at the store in the evenings when I chanced to be there I had no manner of doubt until the middle of last month but that the business was going on properly. But then I found it much otherwise. At that time the ledger was far from being compared with the Day Book and other subsidiary ones; few accounts were settled; little business had been done in the store and not any of the new Books posted. On enquiry I found Mr Hay paid little or no attention to any part of his duty to you but seemed fond of and had gone into the dissipation of the place, engaging in excessive gaming at various times. I shall not say whether this is constitutional in him or arises from the too prevalent example of some in the place but after he had been fully cautioned before going up of the danger of the situation and instructed in the duty required of him, to all of which he cordially assented, his conduct evinces to me a weakness of judgement, great imprudence and incapacity for such a charge. This conduct is totally inconsistent with your interest and security called for an immediate remedy. After consulting with Mr Reid we could think of no other than the change which has taken place and I hope it will prove effectual. I do not know what Mr Hay intends

to do. Being willing to believe from his former expressions that his bad conduct would be only local, I offered that he might stay the time he contracted to serve you at Fredericksburg or Petersburg as an assistant which would in a great measure save his character. But this he declined. I think Mr Cuninghame will give you satisfaction by his operations at Dumfries. I go up there tomorrow or next day to assist in setting last year's books before states can be furnished.

We want three assistants as soon as possible for Fredericksburg, Falmouth and Dumfries.

I have not been fully informed if all the account currents from James River are forwarded. The books at Shockoe are far from being settled, Mr Chalmer not having applied as he promised.

Business of all kinds has been at a stand for some time; we have had no cash purchasers but James Ritchie & Co.'s factors who complete the *Ritchie's* load in this river. They have given 12s. 6d. stg. for some parcels in this town.

Few or no purchasers of tobacco I am informed by Mr Reid appeared at the meeting of the merchants in Williamsburg.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co.

Dumfries 7th April 1773

I am favoured with your letters of the 17th and 19th December and 11th January by the Donalds and New York packet. With much sorrow I condole with you on the death of Mr Alexander Cuninghame, a character so finished as he must be lamented and the want of his ability and great knowledge of business will be severely felt.

I have also to express the great pain I feel at the alarming state of credit in Britain and your distress in money. The representation you make thereof I believe to be real and I have no manner of doubt of your being convinced by the actions of every and each of your factors that they are of the same opinion and will strive all in their power to alleviate your distress by sending if possible beneficial remittances and in strictly complying with your restrictions in drawing bills.

Time will not permit my digesting and answering your letters by

this conveyance but this shall be done on my return home. Meanwhile the line of your duty I take to be as follows:

In consequence of the former limit some money has been engaged to the planters, but as the present price of tobacco exceeds what we are authorized to give when we draw on you the respective sums of 20, 25, 30, and 40s. stg. for each hogshead shipped, none will hereafter be promised. No doubt this rule for our conduct will shorten the quantity I formerly supposed for the total of the purchase. But what it may actually now amount to in the event of the price continuing at 16s. 8d. for Lower James River, Rappahannock and Potomac and at 18s. for upper James River I cannot positively say. I conjecture it may decrease from 16s. to 18s. of the whole. At the same time I hope the price in the three first districts will be reduced early next month to 15s. if not 14s. in the stores should there be a good appearance of plants.

Whatever the prospect of the coming crop may be I think no person will purchase on speculation and I presume no purchaser with any reason can exceed the present price. It will be impossible to sell our collections for money or Glasgow bills at the rate allowed the planters and it is more than probable your ships cannot be chartered. This we may endeavour to do with the ships calculated to arrive prior to September and with the provision made for them provided the price continues at 16s. 8d. and 18s. With regard to withdrawing any of the latter ships you will be regulated by our advices when they leave the colony for the present voyage about the first of June as at that time we shall be on a certainty as to the price and extent of the collection as well as be able to form some judgement of the ensuing crop. If I am not much disappointed in receiving money agreeable to promise for the payment of debts no bills from this quarter shall be drawn on you from the April Court. At any rate there will be few; it is painful to think what may be your situation in consequence of our November draughts. I hope the best and that you will be enabled to return the whole; if otherwise we shall be put to disagreeable shifts and have our credit ruined.

Please to receive enclosed manifests for 236 hogsheads, 249,844 lbs, by the *Janet* which please to apply to the credit of Falmouth store. A shipload of this tobacco came round from Rappahannock; the vessel had a long passage from violent and variable winds which

has detained the ship longer than I expected. I wish her and cargo safe in port.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co. Original enclosed to Mr Gordon at Petersburg; copy by the *Ann*

Falmouth 15th May 1773

Your situation respecting the ruined state of credit in Britain and arising from the numerous and large draughts made on you since October last gives me great pain. And it adds much to my uneasiness to observe you think you have ground to blame your factors for not paying due regard to the representation thereof and to orders sent us since the first of July. Such was the nature of the trade we carried on here for some time past, overloaded with shipping and endeavouring to extend our purchases, that every planter of any credit was able to procure a merchant's engagement for the payment of any sum. Hence, when advices of the failures in Britain reached us late in August we found ourselves entangled with engagements payable in October. Had these not been fulfilled it would have been a great hurt: the loss of credit which a merchant could not in this country easily regain. At the same time I believe every payment was put off in October that could be done with safety. This was the occasion of my drawing from that meeting which I am happy you have accepted, being thereby much eased in my mind. I shall be aware in the future of not making engagements for money until better times.

The store prices for tobacco now established are:

Richmond, Rocky Ridge and Warwick	18s.
Appomatox	16s. or 16s. 8d.
Lower James River, Rappahannock and Potomac	14s.

Whether these prices will stand for the remainder of the purchase or whether they may be reduced in the course of the summer is not certainly known, but I am inclined to believe they will stand. Be that as it may, the present prices are correspondent to your limit of the 17th December.

I observe the quantity of tobacco I supposed the collections to amount to the 18th October is in the whole as much as was expected.

The limit in draughts at so much per hogshead, now fixed and confirmed in your sundry letters, will no doubt shorten that quantity probably one sixth of the whole.

The value of the draughts for Falmouth store will be nearly expended for waggonage and other charges attending the inspecting the tobacco and for the Inspection. However, there is such a sum in outstanding debts at the settlement that I must now count on receiving:

I suppose the other settlements may fall short in proportion:

Fredericksburg

1,200 hogsheads

Dumfries suffered a good deal by the loss of custom during the short time of Mr Hay's having the direction; and the effect of Mr Neilson's death will still be felt when Mr Cuninghame is so much stinted in money there. I am inclined to believe the collection at that place will not exceed, if it reaches

950 hogsheads

550     ,,

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2,700 hogsheads.

It would appear therefore, after loading the *Cuninghame* and *Neptune* in Rappahannock and the *Venus* in Potomac, the remainder of the collections may be about 200 hogsheads on each River or 400 in the whole.

The collections on James River may be lessened in the same proportion. And there may remain, after loading the *Ocean* from Petersburg and Cabin Point, and the *Cochrane* from Richmond and Rocky Ridge about 250 hogsheads, but of this matter, as I am not certain, Mr Henderson will advise you by the *Ocean*. Mine is a probable conjecture and you will consider from it and the situation of the present crop as represented by our advices through the summer whether you will send a ship to each river in the fall, allowing them to lie to be filled from the new Inspection or with-



draw any from the crop. I wish, if you possibly can, you would send a ship to Liverpool for salt; it is an article we cannot do without and which cannot be supplied here. Please also to send some coal for our own use through the winter.

Many were the disappointments in money matters at the late General Court. Before this a factor made good his engagements by drawing bills when his collection fell short. But now being disappointed in receiving payment of debts he was obliged to disappoint. This must make every person more cautious in engaging money hereafter. Hanson, Inglis and Long, and Edward Stabler were the most considerable drawers at Court. They procured thirty per cent which I think may be reckoned the rate of exchange. For once I left Williamsburg without drawing a single bill but was obliged to borrow £300 for which I am afraid I must grant bills soon. There was no demand at Court for tobacco of mean quality. Some of Upper James and York river was sold at 16s. 8d. to 17s. and a quantity from the warehouses at Petersburg at 14s., although fifteen shillings seemed to be generally asked for that tobacco.

The mean quality, in commanding no price at present, should be an inducement with us to give less for our collections on Rappahannock and Potomac but I apprehend that will not be the case generally. Numbers of the planters decline parting with their crops at 14s. and talk of shipping on their own account or keeping it on hand for sometime. The truth is they have had everything their own way for years past and some space must intervene before they are convinced that the merchants have got one side of the question.

I grant we fixed the fall price too high at 16s. 8d. but it was with difficulty that rate could be established, many of the purchasers contending for 18s. Indeed, the meeting prevented the last price from becoming general as some had covertly offered it and it was current in the new stores. At the meeting it was likewise proposed to continue giving 16s. 8d. only to Christmas but in this we were outvoted by a great majority. Mr Trippit opened store here at the beginning of this month with a few goods from Liverpool. He expects an additional quantity from London with his partner George Thornton who went home last summer for that purpose. He retails very low. However, I think it will be prudent to let them take their own way as in all probability the race cannot be long.

Mr Bland's failing occasions his stores to be broken up. In consequence, Mr Briggs is also retailing his goods at a low advance. Such sales will prevent us from raising the advance on goods so soon as might be expected. However, something must be done in September towards that desirable end.

I have fully informed you my notice for superseding Mr Hay in charge at Dumfries, which I hope you will approve of. He has been advised to commence a suit against the Company through me in Prince William Court for damages which he has laid at £750, valuing himself on the contract you extended him in Britain, from which he argues after being placed in a charge I had no right to turn him back to an assistant. I moved the General Court for a writ to have the cause tried there, where we would have the chance of a more intelligent and impartial jury, but they were pleased to refuse my request. It must now be tried in Prince William and what the event may be I cannot say. However, I shall be amazed if a jury can be found to allow him any damages.

The spring has been very favourable and more forward than any I have seen. There were June rains last week making a good season for planting and I am told a considerable quantity of tobacco has been planted in the lower and southerly parts of the colony. The lowness of the price induces some of our planters to talk of tending corn on their tobacco grounds. However, there are a sufficiency of plants and I think a prospect for another large crop.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co. by the *Cuninghame*

Falmouth 17th June 1773

Since writing you the 15th and 30th May the *Venus*, Capt. John Wilson, arrived at the mouth of Quantico Creek the 8th instant and the *Neptune*, Capt. Hugh Morris, at Hobbs Hole the 15th. By the last I am favoured with your letters of the 9th and 13th April.

During some very fine seasons for planting tobacco since the first of this month much has been planted. There is now a large crop in the ground and a fair prospect of its coming to maturity in due time, as the weather has been generally extremely suitable, promising a continuance.

On Tuesday the 8th instant the price of tobacco at Dumfries was reduced to 12s. 6d. which the merchants there are determined not to exceed whatever the price may be at the neighbouring places.

The merchants on their own account here and who have all more or less tobacco for sale will not listen to anything tending to a fall in our price from 14s. They gave as a reason, that it is needless as they have already made nearly the whole of their purchase. The true cause may be an apprehension if the store price is reduced they will not be able to sell to a cash purchaser at a saving price what they have now on hand.

The planters are very unwilling in various parts of the colony to part with their tobacco at the prices offered. A number of those connected with Fredericksburg, having at the beginning of the purchase refused the then price of 16s. 8d., still keep their crops up. Some have procured freight to Liverpool and others refuse to part with it at 14s. In the lower parts of the Northern Neck the planters have entered into an Association, lodged their tobacco in certain persons' hands, and have determined not to sell unless they can procure 18s. currency, at which they estimate the value from account sales rendered from England last year. This association it is said ties up 1,000 hogsheads. It has and will detain Bogle, Somerville and Co.'s<sup>1</sup> vessel the *Annie* long in the country; they also look for the *Jeanie* daily. But what more particularly concerns you is the backwardness of the collection at Fredericksburg for unless the favourable prospect of the coming crop change the planters' minds I am much afraid the *Neptune* must be a considerable time in the country. I hope the best, but whatever way it may be I have declined taking any tobacco on freight, expecting we may collect her load in five or six weeks from this time. This I own is very doubtful.

Tobacco at last Hanover Court was selling from 16s. or 17s. currency payable in October and a great deal at market; Col. Hill continues to give 18s., but for those crops only, which are pointed out to him by his employer.

The store price at Richmond and Rocky Ridge continues at 18s. although some cases at 16s. 8d. There has been very little sold at those places lately. The merchants had an intention of reducing the price generally, but it was doubtful that would not be effected from

<sup>1</sup> Glasgow house with stores at Falmouth and Culpepper

the number of ships now loading and others being daily expected. It is to be feared the present want of tobacco will outweigh the consideration of the favourable prospect of a crop, and the appearance of the markets at home. On the 4th of this month there were only 133 hogsheads sent to the *Cochrane*, and the upper stores were obliged to furnish 40 or 50 hogsheads for the *Ocean* because of what is said to be disappointments at Petersburg and Cabin Point. And, as the collection at Richmond and Amherst is backward, I am apprehensive the *Cochrane* may be long detained. Indeed I am not advised when the *Ocean* would be ready for sea. I wish she may not also be kept too long.

The warehouses at Petersburg are quite full. The great fall in the price of tobacco there from 18s. to 15s. and 16s. has determined many of the planters to keep up and suffer themselves to be sued rather than part with their crops on these terms. At Cabin Point they are equally tenacious of their tobacco refusing to let it go at the reduced price.

The foregoing is the situation of affairs at different places as contained in my advices reflecting the purchase and price of tobacco. The lowness of these prices and scarcity of money discourages the planter from growing tobacco; their thoughts run strongly at present on grain and should wheat be in demand next fall and winter it will be much followed and large quantities raised. The present crop will be a very full one of that article. Happy if it can draw and command money here to relieve the planter from a truly pitiful situation they having made large purchases, expecting the good time which was then to continue, but cannot now procure any money for their produce. When ruin stares them in the face an indulgence of a year or two from the merchant is in my opinion the only thing that can save them, and this cannot well be expected. However, if time is not allowed to almost every class to extricate themselves from debt, I am doubtful a great value of those debts must be lost.

Mr Allan Bogle who came passenger in the *Cuninghame* is now here. Since his arrival he has been employed writing and while he continues at Falmouth I shall point out such employment to him from which he may gain knowledge of the method books are kept in Virginia and the mode followed in carrying on the trade.

That some person should have the direction of your outdoor business without the particular management of any store is certainly highly necessary, this appearing in the same light to you as to me. You have been pleased in your letter of the 17th March to authorize my delivering up the particular charge of Falmouth store on taking inventory next September to Mr William Cuninghame or Mr Walter Colquhoun. But this your intention, I am afraid, must be delayed for the present as Mr Cuninghame has got the charge at Dumfries from which he cannot be moved as there is no person to supply his place. But if there was a proper person still the charge would be imprudent and attended with an evident and great loss. And Mr Colquhoun, although willing to take the charge, thinks himself obligated to go home at the expiration of his indenture on June 1774 to settle some disputable affairs which have lain over since his father's death and which it seems cannot be settled properly without his being on the spot.<sup>1</sup> On this point he is not quite determined but waits for letters in answer to some he wrote last April. However from the tenor of former letters he believes that he will be obliged to go. In this uncertainty I cannot publish any intention of giving up the management of the store. The certainty will not be known here until August, but you may know what the event may be by applying to Mr Colquhoun.

I expect by this time Mr Henderson will have come to a settlement with Mr Chalmer; I have not heard from him for some posts. The copy of Mr Chalmer's letter which you have sent me will not bear reading twice. To me it is curious to see him write that he will not deliver up the books and accounts when I have informed him he has none of the principal ones in his possession.

Sorry I am to observe that the miserable situation of credit with you grows daily worse. I wish earnestly for better times, and hope after the *Ocean*, *Cuninghame*, *Venus* and *Cochrane's* cargoes are disposed of you will be tolerably easy. Every means shall be used to hurry home your effects as quickly as possible.

<sup>1</sup> Son of Humphrey Colquhoun of Barnhill, bailie of Dumbarton. He became a clerk in the Glasgow counting-house of W. Cuninghame and Co. and was sent to Virginia at the age of 20. Returned to Glasgow to settle dispute over his father's estate but remained in the employment of the company and was one of their agents sent out in 1795 to the United States to recover their assets. Strathclyde Regional Archives, B.10/15/7329

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co. by the *Venus, Mercury* and *Neptune*

Falmouth 30th June 1773

On the 22nd instant I received per post your favour of the 29th April by the *Bowman*. In conformity thereto I immediately transcribed a copy for Mr Henderson and forwarded the same by next morning's post. The content of this letter still adds to our pain for your situation. The lowness of the French price at the last sale at 17s. 8d., the circumstance attending that sale which presages the price to be still lower and the apparently ruined state of credit on the eve of a war, are mournful considerations. That a change for the better may soon take place is my ardent wish.

The prospect of a large crop of tobacco increases with the year: in all human probability next exportation will be as large as any preceding one. But the planters on the south side of Rappahannock are not willing to part with their tobacco at 14s. At the same time we are endeavouring to fall in the price to 12s. 6d. which from a meeting we had last night I think we shall be able to effect tomorrow. There is but a small quantity of tobacco for sale on this side of the river, but a fall in the price now will have a beneficial consequence in the next purchase.

I have duly instructed your factors in this quarter of the further restriction in money, that they should not allow one shilling in the collections unless the price was 12s. 6d. and not to engage any for the coming purchase; the limit of twenty shillings sterling per hogshead will be expended this year.

Should you not allow any money to be drawn next year, the different purchases will be short, much short of what they have been and the independent part of the customers will fall off. It is true that at all, or at the greatest part of your stores, there are many large overgrown debts. Could they be collected in money it would be sufficient but this must be the work of time in the present crammed situation of the trade and scarcity of money. And unless we can draw some value in bills to accommodate the clear part of the customers they will leave the store. Of this matter you will please to maturely consider before the final orders are issued for our conduct during next year. I am abundantly sensible that it is

absolutely necessary to reduce the value of your effects in the country, but time must be allowed to the debtor, the worthless part of the customers of each store shaken off, and the good ones retained.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co.

Falmouth 29th August 1773

The times must be indeed bad with you; I was in hopes ere now you would have been easy in money matters but it appears to be much otherwise from the increased restriction in our draughts. In December you fixed the value of those draughts at so much per hogshead provided the price of tobacco was conformable to your views and desired we might postpone drawing the respective proportions as long as possible, particularly that none should be drawn in April. In consequence of this instruction and the situation of the Trade we have made engagements and I am afraid they cannot be fulfilled without valuing on you to the extent of the limit at the October Court. However, you may depend not a shilling will be drawn which can be avoided.

The collections at all your stores have turned out much shorter than what was expected. After sending 71 hogsheads from Rappahannock for the *Cochrane*, we have little or no tobacco remaining on that river. There will be about 100 hogsheads on Potomac. On James River there will not be a hogshead left after the *Cochrane* is loaded so that, exclusive of a small quantity on Potomac, the three fall ships (should they all be sent out) must be filled up from the new crop. From the present situation thereof I am led to believe that this may be accomplished with the store collections before the close of the year.

Our weather continues wet and warm. Indeed in the back countries, continuous to the head of Rappahannock, there has been lately too much rain which, with the hot sun, occasions the forward tobacco to spot and this obliges it to be cut before it is thoroughly ripe. I am therefore afraid the quality of what is passed at the warehouses here will be very mean. The quantity in all human probability will be as large as any preceding years.

Since the first of July I never knew less business done in the stores. We sell few goods and scarce a planter comes to any of the towns.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co.

Falmouth 24th September 1773

We have heard of the sale to the French at  $1\frac{3}{4}$ d. which is low indeed. But the consideration of the price being still farther reduced is dreadful as no given price here will save the exporter. I lost no time in communicating the contents of this letter to your other factors, commanding them in the strongest terms, conformable to order not to exceed that limit in bills for last purchase and that their drafts for the ensuing shall not be more than the respective sums undernoted viz:

Rappahannock and Potomac	10s.	Stg.	per	hogshead	shipped
Cabin Point	15s.	"	"	"	"
Petersburg	20s.	"	"	"	"
Shockoe & Rocky Ridge	25s.	"	"	"	"

On the first inst. your favour of the 26th June came to hand. Before now you will be sensible that the *Janet's* arrival at this time is most unlucky as our collections on Potomac have, like those on the other rivers, fallen much short of what they were conjectured to amount to on a presumption of being allowed to expend from  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the cost in money for the purchase. This is the more unfortunate as she is an old ship and may not stand a passage in the middle of winter which cannot be prevented as we cannot borrow any tobacco to be repaid with the new crop or charter any part of her burthen. She must therefore lie to be filled up from the next collection and when this may be accomplished is very uncertain. I have sent round 50 hogsheads from this river and I believe there is about 120 on Potomac. This I have lately directed to be taken on board with the ship's hands, or with as little expense as possible, and that the whole should be received and reweighed. I fully depend on your keeping back the *Venus*, which I allotted for Potomac in November, in such a manner that she may not arrive there until March.



Next day after the receipt of your letter by this ship I sent over to Mr Henderson those for James River and have advised all your factors that, instead of the tenth day of September, all the inventories are to be taken and the books shut the first day of that month annually.

This regulation reached us rather late for this year. However, as there was exceeding little business done in the stores from the first of this month until the time each factor received the advice, there will not be much impropriety in dealing with the annual states on that day. I have also informed them that in future each factor is to deduct off the amount of the European goods, open and exposed to sale in the store, such as a sum without any regard to a certain rate per cent as they think will make good the sale of those articles, distinguishing them on the Margin of the inventory with the mark D for damaged, and N for unsaleable, to which may be added the particular sum each is decreased in value. At the same time I would observe to you that as a general rate I think five per cent a reasonable deduction of goods opened in the store where it is probable a considerable value has remained for some years.

I have further communicated to your other factors your instructions relative to settling and collecting the outstanding debts and in selling goods: that every prudent measure should be embraced and prosecuted with vigour to collect and reduce the overgrown debts, such as are ultimately good but lie over from year to year, without any transaction or where the balance at settling the books much exceeds the annual payments. In the event of being unavoidably obliged to be in advance for any of this class, great care must be taken that the debt is due on bond, mortgage or bill of sale, that it may bear interest; that the greatest caution is necessary to be observed with dubious debtors, those who have no visible estate but house, furniture, cattle and horse and whose payment depends on their labour. In not frightening them to run off to the new country or neighbouring colonies it is desirable that no action may be commenced against a common planter or dubious debtor which can be avoided, but every other method tried to secure the debt and to induce them to remain in the present habitation. They must be prevailed upon to procure of their neighbours creditable substantial men for their security on allowing a long day of payment,

one, two or three years as the circumstances may be, they discharging the debt, in partial payments or otherwise with interest from the time it becomes due. On their failing to procure personal security, bill of sale or mortgage of their effects is to be taken.

While every method is thus used to ascertain, secure and collect the outstanding debts, I have recommended not to sell to any person (at whatever the advance may be) but to those on whose payment can be depended in twelve months. To those customers who have a visible estate but who are owing more than the produce of their crop, as few goods as can be consistent with common prudence and your interest are to be sold. To the other class of customers those whose payment depend entirely on their labour and who are already in debt to the value of what it may be presumed their crop will yield, only a few articles, absolutely necessary to preserve their bodies from the weather and the implements of their labour, are to be sold.

From this regulation a few goods will go far. I have therefore directed none to be ordered but what there is the utmost necessity for having so that the value on hand at taking inventory in 1774 does not exceed from £500 to £800 at the principal settlements and from £30 to £500 at the back stores.

I have pressed these measures as absolutely necessary desiring each factor to advise from time to time their progress in complying with the order.

Were it possible to allow a greater longitude to your stores at Richmond and Manchester, I think it would tend more to your interest, in which opinion Mr Henderson and Mr Turner, who are now both here join. By the method you prescribe for Mr Lumpkin's conduct you may in time again gain a share of the trade (provided goods become scarce). Meanwhile, the small purchase made there will turn out in comparison excessively high as the quantity cannot bear the change of management. You know the situation of the country, that planters are in general in debt.

What inducement then can a man have to deal at a new store unless he can procure credit for his goods until his crops will discharge the old debt or can draw from the store a sum of money either advanced or in part payment of those crops as will answer his demand? I am the more earnest in this matter as it appears Speirs is

desirous of procuring a large share of the trade at the upper Inspections, while others are lying by, breaking up or curtailing their business. His factors at Rocky Ridge and Richmond are represented to have money at will and you will observe from my last letter he continues to make purchases from those houses at the same price as given in April.<sup>1</sup>

By this opportunity you will receive a letter from Mr Gordon. Next day after the receipt of Mr Cuninghame's letter per the *Active* I was advised by Mr Henderson that Mr Gordon had drawn on you at the July meeting for £1,100 which far exceeds your limit for last purchase, and is greatly contrary to what he promised me at Williamsburg. The excuse he makes for his conduct is in my opinion futile and weak as no man with any discernment would make engagements for money payable at a future day to exceed his limit on a dependence of collective debts. I therefore wrote him that you and he must part, of which notice the following is a copy:

'From what passed betwixt us in conversation at Williamsburg I was told you could not continue longer in the company's employ than the expiration of your contract, but on conditions which I am sure they will not agree to, being quite contrary to the fixed rule they have laid down. We must therefore part and thereby, although with a great deal of pain give you notice on behalf of Messrs William Cuninghame and Company, that they do not choose to prolong the agreement farther than to its expiration, in September 1774 which please to note and advise them accordingly.'

This notice Mr Henderson delivered the 9th instant with your letter of the 26th June prohibiting him from drawing any more bills which from his thoughtless conduct we judged necessary to deliver. From Petersburg Mr Henderson proceeded to Brunswick to Mr Horsburgh with whom he exchanged a missive for five years to take place in September twelve months, in the management of Petersburg store for the consideration of eighty and ninety pounds for the two first years and one hundred annually for the residue, sterling money to be paid on the usual conditions. We have

<sup>1</sup> Speirs, Bowman and Co., the most important of the Speirs group of companies headed by Alexander Speirs. With the Glassford and Cuninghame groups it formed the 'big three' in the Glasgow tobacco trade. T. M. Devine, 'A Glasgow Tobacco Merchant during the American War of Independence: Alexander Speirs of Elderslie, 1775 to 1781', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd. ser., xxxiii (July, 1970), pp.501-13.

determined on breaking up Brunswick store immediately, that the goods now there, which are of small value, shall be moved to Petersburg, and that Mr Horsburgh after a short time during which (if possible he is to settle and adjust every account by bond) shall reside at Petersburg, to gain a thorough acquaintance with the business and customers of that store before he takes charge.

I am in hopes this change will be for the better and that he will draw sundry of the Brunswick people to deal at Petersburg from which place and Cabin Point the debts when settled above can be with ease collected.

There are no cash purchasers for tobacco on Rappahannock. Our usual sellers in the country are embracing every opportunity of shipping their quantities to London, Liverpool and Whitehaven. To the last port Payne, Moore and Cox are sending from 2 to 300 hogsheads from Dixon's and Falmouth warehouses which they review before shipping. This review will I hope make our inspectors more attentive to their duty in future. I was once in hopes of borrowing 200 hogsheads of Potomac tobacco from Martin Pickett but Mr Hector Ross accepted it at 10s. sterling for the *Active* at which price Mr Carr had lately sold 50 hogsheads to Mr Piper.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co.

Falmouth 9th November 1773

On the 19th last I was favoured with your letter per the *Ocean* of 6th and 12th August. I am doubtful that ship will be long detained in the country there being no remainder of last year's collections. It will require a considerable time of the present one to complete her burthen and I am persuaded no cash purchase can be made at your limit to pull her up. Indeed I would wish to avoid this last measure as much as possible as the excess which has been therein for some years part has been partly the cause of reducing the trade to the unprofitable ebb you now find it. By such purchases sinews are bestowed to the sellers in the country by which they may distress the exporter, especially as has been the case of late, when a higher price is exhorted for the commodity than what it will yield in Britain. I am therefore extremely happy you have corresponded with my views in extending the limit in drawing bills to the

respective sums mentioned in yours now before me as I hope prices will be reduced on upper James River from what they were last Inspection. This money prudently laid out will I think secure a purchase in a few years at Richmond and Rocky Ridge of 500 hogsheads each, without sinking three or four times the value, which should be avoided. Former experience shows the absurdity of advancing large sums of money to any one man. It must therefore be evident that the money arising from bills should be laid out and that too with the greatest caution in the purchase of ready tobacco for part goods and part cash from these people who, a scrutiny into their character and circumstances it is judged, will make beneficial customers by taking their whole dealing at the respective stores.

There has already been a sum of money sunk at Petersburg store that I think it would be prudent to be on the collective plan for a year or two, but without decreasing the quantity of the purchase, or losing these customers for whom you paid dear that are good.

From the many disappointments met with last purchase and the deficiency of the supposed totals of our collections I am dubious of fixing any certain quantity this year, more especially as the lowness of the price will prevent many people from carrying the whole of their crops to the warehouse, and the meanness of the tobacco will occasion much to be refused at the Inspection. What I therefore mention on this head you must look upon as a probable conjecture, your measures to be regulated there from advices through the year.

There has been a very large crop housed: I think not less than 65 or 70,000 hogsheads. But it is excessive mean. The wet hot weather in the month of August hurt a good deal in the field and more of such weather at the beginning of October rotted a larger quantity in the houses. I cannot therefore guess nearly to what the exportation may be but will suppose it from 55 to 60,000 hogsheads:<sup>1</sup>

From this calculation the collections will be short of the burthen of the ships by 210 hogsheads. The chief deficiency is on Rappahannock where unless it should be eligible to fill her up with a cash purchase the *Cochrane* on her arrival in September must lie for the new crop. The *Ocean* and *Cuninghame* may arrive in James and Rappahannock rivers, November 1774, and may be loaded with assistance from Potomac (where there will be no ship after the

<sup>1</sup> See table on p.125

Estimate of Collections for Inspection 1774 and Shipping to be provided with loads.

Stores	Rappahannock	Potomac	James River	Total of the Collections	Ships	When to Arrive	Rappahannock	Potomac	James River	Total for the Shipping
Falmouth	750	650		1,400	<i>Janet</i>	Sept.		350	600	
Fredericksburg	1,000			1,000	<i>Ocean</i>	Oct.				
Dumfries		650		650	<i>Cunninghame</i>	Nov.	500			
Cabin Point			550	550	<i>Venus</i>	March		480		
Petersburg			950	950	<i>Neptune</i>	do	470			
Rocky Ridge			250	250	<i>Cochrane</i>	do			450	
Richmond			350	350	<i>Ocean</i>	June			650	
					<i>Cunninghame</i>	do	500			
					<i>Venus</i>	Sept.		480	480	
					<i>Neptune</i>	do				
					<i>Cochrane</i>	do	450			
	1,750	1,300	2,100	5,150			1,950	1,310	2,180	5,360

*Venus* in September before March 1775) before the frost sets in severely.

The *Ocean* and *Cuninghame* will be too late in arriving in the country next spring and fall to bring the goods. They must therefore be sent by the *Venus*, *Neptune* and *Cochrane*. And you will please remember that we must have two cargoes of salt next summer. The one for Rappahannock and the Potomac may consist of 4,000 bushels in bulk and 1,200 sacks of four bushels each.

Our inspection this year promises to be very late. There are about fifty hogsheads passed at Dixon's warehouses and as many refused, partly for being trashy. At Falmouth they have taken 70 hogsheads in running numbers and refused almost an equal quantity for the same reasons as at Dixon's, while at the two warehouses in Fredericksburg they have passed near to 800 hogsheads after refusing a considerable number.

There is no fixed price established here yet for tobacco. It seems to be the general opinion that 12s 6d will be the price until Christmas. This is the consequence of Mr Harrison's purchase at ten shillings sterling. Mr William Porter of Fredericksburg is now under contract with some of my neighbours to allow that price for what they can furnish against a certain day for the ship *Noble Bounty* in the employ of Mr Bell, London, now lying at Hobbs Hole. Besides, many contend that the above price of twelve shillings and sixpence currency is the least that can be allowed the planters in goods and debts, that tobacco cannot be raised for less and were a further reduction now to take place they would be too much discouraged and would leave the province entirely, or turn their hands and labour to something else. This last will be much the case next year, every person having sowed a very large quantity of wheat in so much that I think it may with safety be concluded endeavours will not be used to plant more than from one half to three quarters of a full crop. This in some measure depends on fresh land being cleared through the winter and spring as great part of the former tobacco ground is sown in wheat. There is a ready sale for that grown at present at 4s. 6d. currency per bushel payable in April. The probability therefore of tobacco being in demand during next summer, and that it may then rise in price, is a further reason for fixing it now at twelve shillings and sixpence certain until Christmas.

You will on the whole observe that our collections cannot in all human probability be made at such a nominal price as will correspond with the state and view of a tobacco purchase transmitted us by the *Janet* and *Fanny*, but when indeed was a store purchase made that the price at the time was thought adequate to the expected sale in Britain? The profits on the trade have I apprehend rather proceeded from the advance on goods and, by that means, the net cost of the tobacco shipped. In the year 1764, when tobacco bore a low price in the country there was an over quantity of money in circulation and as payment of debts was procured therein there was little or no occasion of drawing bills to carry through a tobacco purchase. But at this time there is a great change in that respect for from the use of exchange exceeding 25 per cent our specie is almost gone and there is not now more than £70 or 80,000 of paper in circulation. We have very small chance therefore of receiving any other payments for debts than through the produce of the land and a collection of tobacco under these circumstances cannot be made in this quarter without an expenditure of nearly twenty shillings sterling per hogshead. You have also observed that there are considerable debts due by the stores which must be paid. On all these accounts it is apparent we shall be obliged to value on you in bills to the full amount of the limit prescribed for Rappahannock and Potomac when the price of tobacco will probably exceed what it should be to correspond with your estimate. But you may depend the drawing of those bills shall be put off as long as possible and not a shilling drawn under these circumstances which can be avoided.

The advance on goods on James River you have been advised is raised to  $87\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. I hope the same prudence which dictated that result will fix the price of tobacco on saving terms. I think it will correspond with your state much nearer than our northern purchases will do. But on this head I am unprovided to write you fully at present. It is presumed the cost of the upper purchases in account current, September, 1774, will not exceed eleven shillings and nine pence sterling per hundred which I expect fine tobacco will net with you.

The stoppage of Frank and Bikerton<sup>1</sup> of London is extremely

<sup>1</sup> A London firm in the Virginia tobacco trade



unfortunate as the outlay of such a sum of money, even allowing the debt is ultimately safe and will be paid on a medium of eighteen months, must be very distressing in these times. Mr Tonerwell bears an exceeding good character here, of being an assiduous, attentive attorney. But it will be a work of time to collect such a sum in Virginia as you mention their debts to amount to. This must be an additional motive for our acting within the limits in bills and retarding their passage as long as possible. But I am sorry to advise you I must at the ensuing meeting of the merchants about the 25th current draw on you £600 sterling for Falmouth store being to the full amount of last years limit and this is due all to a trifle for inspection, the payment of which has been postponed since April.

We are endeavouring to raise the advance on goods and I have acquainted my sterling customers that I cannot afford to deal with them under  $87\frac{1}{2}$  per cent at which they are much dissatisfied. Some of them will fall off from the store and I fancy it will be the means of the remainder taking few goods. The merchants in Fredericksburg were proposing to leave off selling goods to any planter at a certain advance or keeping any sterling accounts. This it seems is an express injunction from Messrs James Ritchie and Co. to their factors, which Mr Montgomerie made public by an advertisement fixed at Fauquier Courthouse. I think the mode cannot be broken through all at once, and that it was extremely imprudent to alarm the better sort of planter by advertising as by those means they may chance to run themselves into the predicament they wish to avoid, namely objections to the genuine cost of the goods.

Without doubt this is a measure that would be attended with much advantage to the trade but whether it can or ought to be carried to effect at present is to me very doubtful. The better sort of planters have been long accustomed to it and, besides it brings many other advantages to them. It is a check on the honesty of the merchant. Their tempers are much soured at present by the low price of their staple and scarcity of money. It may be more prudent therefore to continue the mode of dealing with an express agreement that the advance is to be on the cost of goods as charged on the invoices. If it is attempted to abolish the custom it should be general

and done with universal consent. We shall see in what manner Messrs Ritchie and Co. succeed and profit by experience, endeavouring in the meantime to curtail our dealings in that manner as much as possible but without noise.

17th. Last night the *Virginia Gazette* of the 11th inst. came to hand from which I extract:

Tobacco exported from Virginia between October 1772 and October 1773:

	<i>Hogsheads</i>
From the upper district of James River	27,592
From the lower district of James River	4,674
York River	8,248
Rappahannock River	13,241
South Potomac	10,541
In free bottoms	5,288
	<hr style="width: 10%; margin: 0 auto;"/> 69,587

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co.

Falmouth 7th February 1774

Since writing you the 28th December, I have been favoured with yours of the 3rd November per the *Boyd* and *Christie*. There is as yet no appearance of the *Cuninghame* which is so far fortunate as we are not fully prepared for her dispatch, and the weather has been such since the date of my last that very little tobacco could be inspected or shipped. But this, as you observe, will keep you long out of remittances and add to your distress occasioned by the scarcity of money. I wish now she makes her appearance soon as the weather is broke and river clear of ice and we would endeavour to give her dispatch.

The *Ocean* is still on hand in James River, the store collections being at the date of my last advices, the 6th January, 100 hogsheads short of her load, and as no freight could be procured on barter or otherwise the time when she could be filled up at that season of the year from the collections was very uncertain. Considering this and

the great necessity of her arriving with you to the March sales, together with the destination of the *Venus*, I advised Mr Henderson to endeavour to purchase from 50 to 60 hogsheads tobacco made from fresh grounds on Petersburg warehouses.

At the date of your letter to Mr Henderson by the *Boyd*, you seem uncertain where to send the *Ocean* on return, but are rather inclined to fix on Rappahannock. On this head I beg leave to refer to the estimate of collections for 1774, in my letter of the 9th November. It appears there that the greatest deficiency of loading the ships will be on Rappahannock. As this deficiency may be still more than then calculated from the backwardness of the inspection at Falmouth and Dixon's warehouses, where they are upwards of 1,000 hogsheads short of the quantity taken last year at this time, and from the smallpox having broke out in Fredericksburg which will deter the planters from coming to the warehouses, I am of opinion she should be returned to James River. I am much afraid we shall find great difficulty in loading the *Neptune* in March should the smallpox spread. To prevent which the inhabitants are at all imaginable pains, having moved those who were affected to a house detached from the town.

The price allowed the planters for tobacco this fall has been 12s. 6d. on Rappahannock and Potomac. This price was offered by all, and firmly fixed by Mr Morson and Mr Lawson who purchased at that rate for all cash. They were in great want, the former to make up a quantity for the *Ritchie* on which ship Mr Jamieson took a charter for 300 hogsheads at £5 per tun. Putting the tobacco alongside in 30 days cost in craft hire exceeding 2s. 6d. per hogshead to be paid by Mr Coutts, the other to make up 200 hogsheads for the *William* on return of a like number shipped by Mr Gray in the *Jeanie* last August. The want of this tobacco and the weather will I apprehend occasion Mr Lawson to pay considerable demurrage on the ship.

Mr Hanson has lately made a purchase from Mr Henry Mitchell of 200 hogsheads for a ship lying at Port Royal. The price has not yet transpired but is supposed to be twelve shillings currency per hundred. Sir Lionel Hyde pays high for Rappahannock tobacco this winter. Happy if it prevents him from buying any more. Indeed Mr Hanson pretends to say that he was unwillingly drawn to give

the price of ten shillings sterling for the first cargo, there being, when the ship arrived, no tobacco for sale on James River, and he was restricted from purchasing any on Rappahannock below Fredericksburg. I apprehend he is in much the same predicament with the last purchase having nearly allowed the vessel to lie 90 days before he bought.

Wheat has been in great demand this fall. The price to the exporter being five shillings currency, joined to the lowness of the rate for tobacco has, as I conjectured, made many planters go entirely on raising grain and all in a considerable degree. If the weather continues favourable there will be a very large quantity made in the colony, in so much that the collection at Fredericksburg and Falmouth must be more than sufficient to load a ship and when that taken on James River may be still more. There has been little difficulty hitherto in selling the grain in the country. The merchants of Philadelphia have come in for the chief part of that trade and their agents do a great deal of business at our General Courts. For instance, Inglis and Long of Norfolk, connected with Willing and Morris, Philadelphia, bought at the last meeting of merchants, as it is said 100 bushels wheat at five shillings payable in April and a commission from the same gentlemen, Willing and Morris, has been executed this fall and winter at Alexandria for 30,000 bushels and a large quantity of flour.

I say it is probable the next year's collections of grain may be sold in the country. But if that should not be the case and you incline to export then please to take notice in your correspondence the situation of the crop and market in Europe for our government as well as to give the masters of your ships particular instructions in the method of loading and keeping the grain from heating in the voyage. Your ships are all too large for the grain trade, more particularly the *Cuninghame* and *Ocean* calculated to arrive in the country next winter. But should the crop of tobacco be short it may be absolutely necessary to fill up the *Cuninghame* with wheat and to load the *Ocean* with tobacco from the Rappahannock and James River stores, she going in James River, the other calling at Hampton Road for orders. In prosecuting the wheat trade, and I apprehend from the prevalency in the planters for turning farmers, it cannot be avoided. You will require two small ships to carry about 7,000

bushels each and could they be so constructed consistent with being good sailing vessels as not to draw more than 11 feet water I believe they might come to Fredericksburg and load.

I am sorry our remittances last year should fall 1,400 hogsheads short of your expectations which must add to your distress. In consequence, thereof, and the backwardness of the present one, we shall retard the passage of any bills on you as long as possible. But I must be obliged to draw one to discharge part of a debt of £400 due to Thomas Seddon the greatest part of which has been left in my hands for some years without interest to the 14th of August last and is now wanted to discharge a judgement and execution against him. I was in hopes to have collected a sufficiency of money from debts to have discharged this sum but am disappointed through the debtors failing to perform their promises. For instance, Mr Thurston who, far from being in the army is now minister of Fredericksburg and a man of fortune, has not been able to pay £200 which I made sure of at this time.

The mode which the French agent wants established for receiving tobacco is a ruinous one. As they have so much in their power at present I apprehend they will be able to dictate the terms at next sale in March. However, the sale may turn when the trade may get clear of the imposition and repay them in kind. Nothing will contribute more thereto than the merchants drawing their subject sunk here with narrow bounds.

Undercover you have schemes for Falmouth, Fauquier, Culpepper and Dumfries stores for fall, 1774. These schemes have been ready and would have been forwarded some time ago but no opportunity offered. I believe in the Falmouth one there are no goods ordered but what will readily sell to good men. But it will be impossible to reduce the value on hand below £1,500 at next inventory. The year following it may be £1,000. The Fauquier store is exceeding bare at present and, as the scheme for the spring is not so well assorted as I could wish, they will then be without many necessary articles which is partly the occasion of the one now sent being so large. Here also the goods on hand next September will exceed £800 unless the sales and purchase should be more than I expect. At Culpepper I cannot with any precision calculate what will be on hand. The goods ordered of which I have curtailed on the margin

of the scheme every unnecessary article could easily be sold, but I am afraid the returns will be slow.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co.

Falmouth 19th February 1774

This accompanies the annual papers for Falmouth, Fauquier and Culpepper stores for last purchase which I hope you will find free from error. You are charged in the three account currents with 1,408,428 lbs. tobacco which costs at an average price ten shillings and three half pence = £7,128 1s. 6d. The price at Falmouth and Fauquier cannot I think be much complained of. The highness of that at Culpepper is occasioned by the increase of debts arising from goods sold at less than one hundred per cent, and from the smallness of the purchase which could not defray the expense. You have also account current for servant consignments by which there is still due £5,208 4s. 10d.

In your letter of the 26th June ult. you make sundry remarks on the inventories for 1772. I shall now reply thereto as far as I have been informed.

Falmouth: The fourteen negroes in the inventory for 1773 are employed in the following manner:

- Five: Cuffy, Martin, Lucy and her two children, Patty and Sarah: house servants.
- One: Jonathan: stowing ships.
- One: Phill a carpenter, extremely useful on many occasions. Employed at Culpepper store, building a stable and when we have no employment for him he can readily be hired at 50s. per month.
- Four: Adam, Jack, Frame and Jack: sloop, *Lark*.
- Three: Primus, James, Mark and a white servant: a schooner.

Probably there may be one too many servants for the houses. Four are as few as can be done with. In which opinion I think you will join when it is considered one is frequently abroad, that all our clothes are washed at home and that we cut and cart the fire wood. Jonathan, Lucy and her children are a family of negroes purchased

by Mr Alexander Cuninghame. The children have since grown up, and I propose selling one of them when an opportunity offers. The schooner having sprung a leak when carrying a load of tobacco to the *William* I have had her examined by two masters of crafting vessels and a carpenter who are of opinion she is unfit for further service. The enclosed abstract of her account from the time she was built to the first of September last whereby there appears to be a gain of £161 16s. 8d. exclusive of the sum she is then valued at in inventory is convenience of the benefit of those vessels. And you will also advert that there has been hitherto an annual gain on the negro account. To which if we add the great advantage in the dispatch of your ships, the conclusion must be that country craft are absolutely necessary. For which reason, and that the materials of the schooner may be of some service, I propose to have another built. Dumfries: It is necessary to keep two horses here, they doing the carting from the landing.

Cabin Point: Extract from R. Kennan's letter of the 22nd September: 'one negro boy is as much as is necessary about the store but two horses are as far as can be done with from the number of county courts when attendance is necessary and from my being obliged to be in Carolina at least four times a year. One of the negroes on hand last inventory was taken for debt and has been since sold.'

Brunswick: Extract from A. Horsburgh's letter of the 4th January: 'the reasons for having two riding horses and furniture were mentioned to the company the 24th October 1772 and those for having a waggon and team the 25th December following. On their not thinking these reasons sufficient, a riding horse and furniture have been sold, as well as the waggon and horses (except one) with the negro driver. I cannot possibly do without the other riding horse; the waggon one shall be disposed of as soon as possible.

Granville: R. Kennan writes the 22nd September last: 'The two negroes in the inventory for 1772 are still on hand in Mr Henderson's possession – they have been offered for sale but it cannot hitherto be effected to advantage. The occasion of having two was: I sold the one I at first carried out and Mr Henderson supplied another. Sometime after this purchase of the first having met with some

misfortune he was prevented from complying with his agreement in the payment. So circumstanced I was obliged either to take the negro back or run a great risk of losing the value. With regard to keeping two horses, it was necessary, being frequently at Cabin Point, one was often wanted in my absence. One of these horses is now sold; the other is in use at Cabin Point.

Petersburg, Halifax, Mecklenburg: I have had no particular account from these settlements in the situation of TG. I have not required any from Petersburg thinking to have been on the spot before this time. He writes the 4th January. 'As the company mentioned their disapprobation of Messrs Dobbie and Johnston having so many horses etc. on hand, I gave them both my instruction to dispose of everything they could possibly do without, of which I shall write you more fully when I come down from thence.'

Rocky Ridge: When Mr Turner was here in September I showed him your remarks on his inventory and as he had a written memorandum thereof before now you will have his reasons and answer in full.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co.

Falmouth 16th April 1774

On the 14th ult. I left home on a tour to your different stores on James River and the back countries and shall make some remarks on the situation of those I have visited.

The business at Richmond is very small, and what is worse there is little chance of increasing it, at least there is no immediate prospect for doing so. Some of those planters who used to deal with Messrs Donald and Co. were procured as customers on their store being discontinued. But they are dropping off to Mr Buchanan who has again opened store in company with Alexander Donald, James McDowall and Co.; he being an old resident and much esteemed by the planters has greatly the advantage over new settlers. In short it will be extremely difficult to draw any customers from the old stores at the place, namely Henderson, McCall and Co., under the charge of William Mitchell; Alexander Speirs and Co., by Robert Burton, and Peterfield, Trent and Co. The only probable chance of



your coming into a scheme of trade is in the event of those last gentlemen giving up, which is an event that may not be at a great distance as Colonel Edward Carter has withdrawn from the partnership. On this happening you may make a considerable purchase, but until then it cannot be large. To aid Mr Henderson to make it as considerable as possible under the present circumstances I think, considering his being intimately acquainted with your carrying on the trade, you may allow him some greater latitude than what is prescribed your other factors in money and goods. Indeed were you to leave the conducting the business at this store entirely to his prudence with some general directions I believe you would have no cause to repent of the confidence so placed. The present collection is not expected to exceed 120 hogsheads tobacco and about 1,000 bushels of wheat. Such a small purchase as this cannot defray the attendant expences and be made on saving terms. Something therefore must be done to increase it. What that may be you are the best judge; I have as above mentioned my opinion.

Mr Turner at Rocky Ridge has shown me his correspondence with you by which I observe you are fully informed of the prospects opening at that place for enlarging your trade there. A number of good men have begun to deal with him last fall, by which means he thinks he will sell through the course of the year £2,000 sterling in goods and that the collection will amount to 250 hogsheads tobacco and 3,000 bushels of wheat. At the same time he will not drain upon you for more (as the price of tobacco is higher than your limit) than twenty five shillings sterling per hogshead and no part thereof unless he should be disappointed in his wheat money before the end of the purchase. From this view you will see the necessity of the settlement being well supplied with goods and an allowance in money of £3 per hogshead. I daresay the purchase there will become considerable in a year or two. The cost of the last purchases is very high by which, and the preceding one, I have pointed out to Mr Turner you must have lost a very large sum of money. This is owing to the large amount in bills drawn on you to carry through the purchases, and the smallness of the remittances which even at the price allowed in the country falls upwards of £1,000 short of the value of those bills. This he will endeavour to remedy hereafter and I flatter myself he will be successful.

Mr Gordon having gone to Halifax and other back courts in March I had not an opportunity of seeing him. I understand some of the customers at this store and those too for whom large sums of money have been advanced have disposed of their crops to other merchants, partly because Mr Gordon had declined paying any money for them and partly I suppose from an inclination to shift. This shows the absurdity of advancing large sums of money for any man as they will only deal with you while it is conducive to their own interest. By this means the annual purchase may not be more than 400 hogsheads. This is a small collection considering the subject sunk there, but small as it is I am doubtful it cannot be carried through without exceeding your limit in bills. As there was a large amount due by the store at last balance and you know there is still a considerable sum to pay for Col. Munford. You are largely in advance for this settlement and I apprehend have lost a capital sum thereby. What this is chiefly occasioned by is obvious.

Petersburg from its situation is undoubtedly the best place in the colony for making an extensive and favourable purchase. I would hope therefore you will in a short time not only regain the money already lost but reap considerable profit. Mr Gordon will, I am persuaded, do cheerfully what he can to further those ends by settling in a proper manner with the customers their accounts prior to his giving up the charge and by introducing Mr Horsburgh as his successor. Mr Horsburgh was at Petersburg when I was there but was to attend in Brunswick from March to April court to collect those debts or to settle the remainder by bond. From his management of the Brunswick store, from the clear manner he is winding up the same and his known prudence, I think we may draw a favourable conclusion of his operations at Petersburg.

With regard to the situation of your business at Mecklenburg, Halifax and Amherst, I beg leave to refer you to copies of three letters herewith sent which Mr Henderson and myself wrote to Messrs Johnston, Bartlett and Lumpkin.

I cannot say I entertain any favourable opinion of Mr Johnston's management at Mecklenburg. He has indeed been to blame. He promises to pay great attention to his business hereafter which time will discover. I am afraid when you come to receive his states the tobacco will be found to cost much higher than even that at Peters-

burg. I am not qualified to judge whether it is a good situation for a tobacco store. The land in the neighbourhood does not appear to be remarkable good. However Mr Johnston is sanguine in his expectations; as you will observe he has asserted that the present collection will be 250 hogsheads. I am afraid this assertion will not be verified for on a scrutiny into the names of those from whom he expected tobacco we could only number 164 hogsheads. Mr Horsburgh must be instructed to keep a watchful eye over the management at this place. The Halifax store is fixed apparently in good tobacco country and I daresay will prove with good management a successful settlement. Mr Henderson has given a very favourable character of Mr Bartlett which, from my observation, I believe to be just. The purchase of this place last year was nearer the conjectured quantity than any other of your stores in that quarter and I think made on tolerable terms. It is presumed the collection this year would amount to 240 hogsheads and I think may be increased considerably after Mr Bartlett becomes acquainted.

At Amherst, Mr Lumpkin, who appears to be attentive to his business, thinks he has already customers who make 400 hogsheads tobacco. But from being in debt to other merchants or through his not being able to supply them with the sum of money they want, he can only collect this year, and that too by expending £750 in cash, 230 hogsheads. His store is fixed about 12 miles from Stowells ferry on James River, a small distance south of the tobacco row of mountains and 17 miles above the river. The land is remarkably fresh and good here, and the quality of the tobacco equal if not superior to any in the colony. The planters require much courting and are hard to deal with, but I think you will soon make a large purchase provided the store is liberally supplied with coarse staple articles and Mr Lumpkin is furnished with a considerable proportion of money. Your limit for this year militates against him.

The present inspection on James River will be large. But the tobacco is of mean quality. The store prices as fixed at Richmond for upper tobacco, 16s. 8d., at Petersburg for 15s. and at Cabin Point for lower James River, 12s. 6d. In the back countries on that river, although the planters complain greatly of the lowness of the prices, they are still making preparation for another crop of tobacco.

It is otherwise with those who are near to navigation. They are falling more and more on raising grain.

The price here continues at 12s. 6d. At the same time I am persuaded our inspections in the upper part of the Northern Neck will be greatly short of what they have been for some years past. The planters did not carry much of their crop to the warehouses in the fall. It has suffered much in their tobacco houses through the winter in so much that there is an universal complaint of losing from a quarter to one half when it is brought to the prize. Still what is brought to our houses is excessively mean and it is rare to see a hogshhead pass without having some part to *pick*.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co.

Falmouth 28th May 1774

It is a fact that little tobacco comes to our warehouses and what does come is chiefly refused. At the same time our river swarms with ships. The annual ones from Liverpool are just arrived and in general bring tolerable account sales. From a list which I shall subjoin hereto it appears there are thirteen ships now loading which will carry 5,400 hogshheads and there are several others daily expected. From all which it may be inferred that the demand will be brisk. If we can keep the store price at 12s. 6d. it will be as much. The *Ocean* must be ordered into James River; the *Cochrane* or *Neptune* on their return will nearly sweep off the whole Rappahannock collections and the *Cuninghame* may be totally unprovided for.

I am glad to observe that the tobacco market in London and Rotterdam is turning bare, even although it may be occasioned by merchants purchasing on speculation, as this, with the backwardness of the present exportation, the uncertainty of its quantity, and the doubtful situation of the ensuing crop will I flatter myself enable you to keep the French price at 1 $\frac{7}{8}$ d., refusing their reduced offer of 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. with the tolerable discounts. Could a purchase of eastern shore tobacco, either Virginia or Maryland, answer at nine shillings sterling to fill up the *Cuninghame* in November?

I set off for Williamsburg tomorrow. This meeting has been long

postponed, indeed we have been for years past detained so long in town before the whole company were assembled that every person is in doubt when to go as he is loath to be there before the bulk to lose so much time. Attempts have been made and resolutions signed by members of the trade to meet at a certain day during the sitting of the General Court, but they have had very small effect, soon became obsolete, and this greatly discourages any future trial. However, I shall not be backward. Could the meeting be fixed at a certain day we would have ourselves to blame for staying too long in town but a precise number of days cannot be ascertained as it will sometimes require more, sometimes less, depending on the price of bills and their value is generally ascertained from the demand and quantity of money and market. I shall be obliged to draw on you this court for at least £600 sterling on account of Falmouth store and its dependancies. What the rate of exchange may be is uncertain; it will be regulated by the wheat purchasers. If they have procured specie to answer their demands, which is much doubted, it will rise; on the contrary should they trust to passing bills at this meeting it will be reduced from 30 per cent.

By a gentleman just from Williamsburg I am informed that the General Assembly which had met the 5th inst. was dissolved by the Governor on Thursday last because the House of Burgesses, being as they say deeply impressed with apprehension of the great danger to be derived to British America from the hostile invasion of the city of Boston, whose commerce and harbour are on the first of June to be stopped by an armed force, had resolved that the members of the House should set apart the said first of June for fasting, humiliation and prayer, devoutly to implore the divine interposition for averting the heavy calamity. It was generally thought they would take such notice of the Act of Parliament relative to the town of Boston<sup>1</sup> as must occasion a dissolution but this it was hoped would be put off until the country business was finished. As it is, there is nothing conclusive done and I apprehend several laws are expired or near expired particularly the Inspection Law which they had voted reasonable to be continued and which ends the first of October, 1775.

<sup>1</sup> The Boston Port Act (14 Geo. III, c. 19) provided for the closing of the harbour at Boston to commence from and after 1 June, 1774

## List of Ships loading tobacco in Rappahannock, 23rd May, 1774.

*Hogsheads*

Fredericksburg <i>Planter</i>	300	London, from Mr Guest on consignment
Port Royal <i>Betsey Wood</i>	330	Whitehaven, from Mr Martin addressed to Mr Yates
„ „ <i>Neptune Wilson</i>	320	Glasgow, from Mr Martin addressed to H. Mitchell
Leeds <i>Betsey Benson</i>	300	London from Gate & Fearnon add. to D. Stephenson
„ <i>Jushira Gray</i>	600	London from Mr Stewart add. to T. Hodge
„ <i>Nasson Wignall</i>	450	Liverpool from Mr Goddard on consignment
„ <i>Malbro Davison</i>	500	Liverpool from Mr Backhouse on consignment
Hobbs Hole <i>Liberty Alexander</i>	320	Liverpool from Tate, Alexander and Co. consignment
„ „ <i>Molly Parry</i>	460	Liverpool from Mr Clay on consignment
„ „ <i>Jeanie Steel</i>	450	Glasgow addressed to Mr Lawson
„ „ <i>Cuninghame Buchanan</i>	500	Glasgow addressed to Mr Lawson
„ „ <i>Betsey Ross</i>	480	London, for Dunlop & Wilson add. to G. Hamilton
„ „ <i>Ritchie Robertson</i>	360	Glasgow addressed to Mr W. Coutts

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co. by the *Betsey*, Capt. Ramsay

Williamsburg 7th June 1774

Since writing you the 28th ult. I have not been favoured with any of yours. The members of the House of Burgesses at a meeting after the dissolution of the Assembly joined in an Association, or advice to the people, wherein they recommend their not using any East India goods, except spurs and saltpetre until the Act of Parliament imposing a duty on tea be repealed. Before they parted an express arrived from Boston, Philadelphia and Annapolis, with letters testifying the resentment of the northern provinces against the late oppressive Act of Parliament. That from Boston conveyed a vote of a town meeting proposing that the colonies should stop all importation from and exportation to Great Britain and every part of the West Indies. In answer to this proposition the committee of Philadelphia required time to collect the sentiments of the inhabitants of not only the city but colony on a measure of so great importance. The inhabitants of Annapolis entered warmly into the

proposal and have made some violent resolves, besides putting a stop to all exports and imports. There is one resolve which binds the lawyers: not to prosecute any cause for the recovery of a debt due to Great Britain. But it is said, on reconsidering this, it was rejected by a majority. On the receipt of these letters at Williamsburg twenty five of the members of the late House of Burgesses met, when it was unanimously agreed to refer the further consideration of the matter to the first of August. Meantime letters are to be written to the representative of each county to take the opinion of the people on this important affair. What determination they may then come to is uncertain. It is said that a non-importation agreement will be entered into, as well as resolutions to suspend at some future day exporting any commodities to Great Britain. As the consideration of this affair is thus delayed some are of the opinion that something decisive may be done at Boston before then. Meanwhile our violent patriots, of which there are a number, will cool and they will consult reason and their own interests in the measures then embraced. For certain it is this colony in its present situation cannot be supported without importing goods, and what benefit would arrive from the crops they raise unless they were brought to market? Yet I assure you the worst is to be dreaded, as moderate men are not listened to in the present ferment and it is to be feared those who are violent will through their great love of freedom overlook honesty, justice and honour. At Fredericksburg, the inhabitants have exceeded the Burgesses' requirements, having not only associated not to use tea, but not to sell any.

Your trade is indeed in a shocking situation and we are in doubt in what manner to act. In consequence of the Assembly's sudden dissolution on the Tea Bill, laws which expired last April have not been renewed. The General Court made an order that their clerk should charge the fees as usual; at that time it was expected the law would be renewed at the meeting of the Assembly. But the Court of Hustings of which the Speaker is recorder did not sit yesterday as usual. For that reason it is to be feared the example will be followed by all the county courts, especially as many patriots think the stoppage of the Courts of Justice will have a powerful effect towards removing those unconstitutional Acts of Parliament, as the merchants of Great Britain will thereby be induced to interest themselves

on the occasion. Thus you see we are or shall soon be without law, and your debts mostly at the honour and honesty of the debtor. There was a proposal last night of the trade now in town petitioning the governor to call an Assembly for the purpose of renewing this bill. But on his lordship being sounded it was found it would have no effect and therefore declined.

I cannot add more on this head at present; in sending out fall goods you will be regulated by your own judgement and from what others do.

I only got to town on Sunday and have not yet learned much mercantile news but I can observe people want to buy tobacco much above your limit.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co. Original per the *Houston*; copy by the *Minerva*, Capt. Leitch

Falmouth 26th July 1774

I enclose copies as Mr Reid did the original, of bill of loading for 495 hogsheads tobacco, the *Cuninghame's* cargo, also Capt. Buchanan's bills and have to desire you will please to credit Falmouth store with £106 14s. 8d., value of the bill, £70 8s. 7d. amount of craft hire; and 176 hogsheads, 178,980 lbs tobacco, by the manifest. The ship passed the Capes at 10 o'clock in the sight of the 30th June and I hope will arrive with you safe and in good time.

On the 12th inst. I received your favours of the 26th April by the *Ocean* forwarded by Capt. Ewing who arrived at Urbanna the day before. I did not expect you would have sent this ship to Rappahannock. However, I wrote several letters at Williamsburg directing Capt. Ewing, should his destination be otherwise, to proceed to City Point on James River for his load. One of which letters was delivered him on his reaching Urbanna; in consequence he came up to Hobbs Hole in the pilot boat, engaged craft to carry off the goods the ship had on board and left Rappahannock early on the morning of the 14th. When I wrote that letter in Williamsburg the 18th June I had every reason to believe the collections on James River would be fully sufficient to load the ship with tolerable dispatch in the month of July. In such belief I continued to the first of this month when Mr Henderson advised on his return from the meeting



at Williamsburg he had reason to think the collections would fall 200 hogsheads short of her load. At the receipt of this advice I expected the *Ocean* would be returned to James River and wrote him by one means or other to make preparation for filling her up, either by a cash purchase, or by chartering one or 200 hogsheads as he found necessary, preferring a charter rather than purchasing at an extra price, desiring if her load could not with satisfaction be accomplished by either method, to advise and I would try what could be done here. At that time we had not 100 hogsheads on hand on Rappahannock. Thus were matters circumstanced when Capt. Ewing's advice of his arrival reached me. On considering, I came to the resolution if Mr Henderson was not fully prepared to give the ship immediate dispatch to order her to Hobbs Hole. Accordingly I wrote him the 13th if he was not in that situation to run on receipt of my letter an express to Urbanna directing Capt. Ewing to go up to Hobbs Hole having ordered him by return of his express to remain at Urbanna until he received such directions. Mr Henderson thought as they were not prepared for her reception it would be prudent to let the ship remain in Rappahannock; but as Capt. Ewing's express did not reach Urbanna with my letter to 3 o'clock p.m. on the 14th the order for his remaining there was too late. As you will observe as above he had left the River early that morning. They have therefore the ship in James River. I cannot say what preparation is made for her but I am dubious she must be filled up from the three rivers. Indeed from the present appearance all the collections will not much more than do it when no cash purchase can be made at your limit and it cannot with propriety be exceeded on the present appearance of the crop on the ground. At the same time old tobacco will be scarce in this quarter. In what manner, under such circumstances the *Neptune*, *Venus* and *Cochrane* are to be loaded, I am at a loss to say. There has been little doing for a month past at the warehouses. The Inspection draws near to a close; we have not 200 hogsheads on Rappahannock, are greatly short of that quantity on Potomac and it is now undoubted that the collections on those two rivers will fall at least one quarter short of what I calculated on in November, partly occasioned by the crop being destroyed in the tobacco houses and partly by the planters keeping it from the inspection.

Those merchants who generally sell their tobacco in the country, depending on prices being at the lowest, are in no haste to part with their tobacco. At the same time there is not much for sale here. Simon Fraser from Urbanna bought lately 70 hogsheads at 10s. stg. from John Glassell and Daniel Payne, and yesterday John Richards for Mr Nott (who has purchased the debts due Perkins, Buchanan and Brown at their store at Leeds and entered into trade on account of himself and sundry persons in London) bought from William Love a quantity said to be 50 hogsheads at a price exceeding Frasers. Thus you will observe your limit is exceeded, when in my opinion there is neither a short crop on the ground, or the weather unfavourable thereto. If we should therefore during the continuance of a good prospect for a crop purchase any from the merchants, it will only be as much as will be absolutely necessary to load the ships that arrive in Rappahannock and Potomac prior to the *Cunninghame*. This last, should she come straight out, of which you will consider, must remain in Rappahannock for the new crop as well as the *Venus* or *Cochrane* in James River. It will be needless therefore to run out any ship, I mean chartered ones, for James and Rappahannock Rivers, as those two will be fully sufficient, especially as the *Ocean* may be again in the country in January.

I have said that there is neither a short crop of tobacco planted or the weather favourable which I think from my advices is in general the case. In the back countries at least they have planted fully what they intended. On the rivers they may be shorter than usual from a number going so largely on wheat; on the whole I would incline to be of opinion there is a full sufficiency growing to make 50,000 hogsheads. The summer has in general hitherto been warm and sultry, seasonable for tobacco. In some places they complained of drought and I believe we suffered by that just in this neighbourhood as much as anywhere but we had fine rains on the 23rd instant which obviated all complaints.

This favourable prospect will I hope enable us to carry through the store purchase at 12s. 6d., and on the commencement of the new inspection we must lay ourselves out to but what we can at that price from the planters as I think the probability is that prices will rise in the course of next summer.

The wheat harvest is now over; it has been a favourable one. What it will yield I cannot say but I apprehend as much as last year's. I wish it may continue to be in as much demand and at as high a price as then; it is, from what I can learn, to be feared it will not.

Nothing has yet happened (that I am informed of) at Boston in any way decisive to ascertain the dispute betwixt Britain and the colonies. Our Assembly is prorogued to the beginning of November but the late members of the House of Burgesses who have been generally re-elected are to meet the first of next month. Since the dissolution they have been collecting the sense of their constituents on the measures necessary to be pursued. In consequence Associations have been published which are for breaking off all commercial intercourse with Great Britain. What may be the determination at Williamsburg is uncertain. The probability is that it will end in a very restricted importation and a stoppage of exports at some future period not sooner than the crop on the ground is shipped, having reference to what may be finally concluded on at a General Congress of deputies from all the colonies which it is expected will meet at Philadelphia sometime in September. But this is only conjecture as the temper of warm patriots would rather lead to a different conclusion: they would stick at nothing to procure a firm establishment for American liberty. I am indeed afraid they may at a short day put a stop to exports. The Courts of Justice remain shut and in some counties the Act of Parliament relative to Boston is expressly given as a reason. At this rate their violence must be a great hurt to the cause as it will undoubtedly make the merchants of Great Britain enemies from being natural and hitherto fast friends.

Agreeable to your letter of the 17th March, 1773 I have extended a missive of agreement with Mr Walter Colquhoun for five years, beginning the first of September and shall then deliver the charge of Falmouth store, in which capacity I think I can pledge myself he will give you satisfaction from showing a knowledge of business and an attention thereto. If the situation of affairs here should admit of it I shall after the first of September endeavour to put your plan in execution for ascertaining and reducing the debts due on Rappahannock and Potomac of which more hereafter.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co.

Falmouth 29th July 1774

I perfectly agree in sentiment with Mr Cuninghame in his letter of the 27th April by the *Ocean* that it is absolutely necessary to ascertain and collect the whole debt due on the first day of next September at your settlements of Falmouth, Fredricksburg and Dumfries and that a line may be drawn on a business continued so many years and the value of the debts reduced nearer to the annual remittances. The plan of putting the whole debts without any exceptions into my hands will undoubtedly, if prosecuted with prudence and spirit, best answer the end proposed. As the execution of this plan, although absolutely necessary, will occasion much vexation in the business of the stores I was very desirous to have more opinions than my own and accordingly consulted Mr Reid and Mr Colquhoun on the subject in queries as contained in a letter to Mr Reid of which the following is a copy:

“As no considerable piece of business should be undertaken without considering what may follow therefrom: in the event of the debts due at your store at next balance being put into my hands to collect, what would be the consequences regarding the effect such a measure may have on the customers of the store, and on a new purchase to be made by you after delivery of the debts? When you consider these points take this intelligence along with you, the Company being sensible of the magnitude of the debts due at Fredericksburg store, that the greater number are overgrown or by far exceed the annual payments and that many be over and are carried forward year after year without any payment which the hurry of the sale business prevents you from looking after in a proper manner. The Company are very desirous that they should be reduced to a nearer compass, not exceeding the amount (unless to answer a particular purpose) of the annual collections. Also they think it highly necessary after the store has been carried on so many years, that there should be some line drawn against all disputes to former transactions after the first September next, you on that day commencing new books and a new trade.

Presuming that you will think these weighty considerations and the measure proposed a right one, I proceed to ask you particular queries which the above general one will branch into.

What will be the amount of the debts due next September, the method most eligible to ascertain those due by account and to further the collection? Also, the supposed extent of that collection for two or three years distinguishing each year.

What may be the value of the goods on hand next inventory; of the Scheme for the fall of 1774 or the supposed quantity to arrive; of the Scheme for spring, 1775 or the supposed value then wanted; of the sales from September, 1774 to September, 1775; the average drawn exclusive of the charge of importation, the charge of management for one year, the sum of money you would be obliged to assume or advance in the purchase, and the amount of that purchase? After maturely considering this matter and as quick as you can, I beg you will give full answers to those questions, and to do this in a clear and distinct manner. I have further to desire you will have recourse to calculation in figures which gives satisfaction in one view. Such supposition you may continue for five years and thereon found an account current for each. I am aware circumstances may occur in managing a business exceeding different from what was expected but still it is necessary there should be some plan of action established to serve as a general rule. In the present case it must always be remembered: that on the one hand you are to give the utmost assistance to ascertain, secure and collect the old debts, and on the other to endeavour to make your purchase as large as you can, consistent with prudence and having no greater amount in debts than the supposed value of the collection."

On these principles, Mr Colquhoun has made sundry suppositions of purchases, which with the schemes for the stores he enclosed you by this opportunity and to which I refer. Mr Reid replied as follows:

"I am now to give you opinion with regard to the proposed plan of new modelling the debts at the different stores.

The mode that on first thought occurs is putting the whole debts indiscriminately into your hands, which may be the way most effectually to obtain the end desired of settling and alleviating the disputes that must necessarily be in a business carried on for so many years and of redressing the amount and number of the balances. But as the strictest attention must be paid to the future business of the store this method has its inconveniences. It may

surprise and embarrass many of the best customers so as to occasion their leaving the store; it may also be a means of preventing many of the large debtors from giving bonds knowing they are to be put into a person's hands to collect, even though they should be advertised that no harsh methods will be taken to enforce payments. Should this method be adopted I may perhaps receive 500 hogsheads from those clear of debt and those who owe one crop, most of whose balances I should be obliged to take back. You might perhaps get 150 or 200 hogsheads besides from those whose balances are too large; indeed some of the 500 may be too large but who there is in probability will reduce them first, that I shall be obliged to take them back.

I should suppose the debts will be reduced from £26,412 at the next balance and the sterling goods, exclusive of the full cargo

		£2,000	
The full cargo I suppose will be nearly last year's		1,000	
The goods next summer		90	
		<hr/>	
		4,000	
Sales £3,000 sterling goods average advance			
90 per cent	£5,700	3,000	
Cash wanting £400	500		
Assessments to you	2,400		
	<hr/>		
		8,600	
Supposed 500 hogsheads at £6	£3,250		
Charges of business	450		
	<hr/>		
		4,900	1,000

By this I shall have £1,000 sterling goods and £4,900 currency debts in the fall of 1775. This calculation is so uncertain that I believe we need not go further.

For the reasons I before mentioned I am led to think a better mode might be adapted. I want to propose that nothing public should be said of it; that I should put into your hands, after giving bonds (if to be got), proved accounts of all such as, from the long

standing or ability of the people or being indebted and dealing elsewhere, are not proper persons or customers. These, as I find it necessary to give over to you, should be taken out of my books and entered into books opened for the purpose which will answer the purpose of being better looked after and recovered without alarming the whole of the customers. The managers at each store sometime should make a point of getting notes of settlement from the 1st September under pretence of the company being new formed or some such reason. This is what occurs to me on the subject; whatever plan you adopt I will readily fall into at the same time assisting in adjusting and collecting the balances. When I think of winding up those old affairs the present delay in every Court of Justice makes me wish it was not necessary."

The force of these objections is easily repelled. A method may be fallen on to advise those customers with whom it would be profitable to deal of the alteration without affronting or alarming them. Indeed if a purchase of 500 hogsheads can be made the first year it is not material who is affronted. There may be some who may refuse to grant a bond for their debts; I am in hopes those would be few; only such who would take any advantage from such a principal are dangerous customers. Certainly many more specialities could be procured on the collecting plan than were the store to be continued on the old footing. On the whole I am clearly of opinion that putting the whole debt into my hands and letting the factors assume those that are good from time to time is by much the best method that can be adopted. The one Mr Reid proposes is deficient as by following it there would be no general line drawn against disputes prior to the first of September. Therefore, should the Courts of Justice be opened, which I expect will be the case as soon as the fee bill is renewed, I shall put it in practice even if there is a stop to exports. It will be then more necessary to ascertain the debts.

The weather continues sultry and hot. Daily advices confirm the favourable prospect for a crop of tobacco in our back countries. On this side of the ridge Mr Love only sold 25 hogsheads to John Richards; the price was between eleven shillings stg. and Mr [blank] declined taking any more at that price but offered 13s. 9d. currency.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co. per the *Bogle*

Falmouth 10th August 1774

Since writing to you the 26th and 29th inst. I have been forwarded with a copy of your letter to Mr Henderson of the 26th May relative to your not having received the stores from Mecklenburg settlement. I hope they would get to hand soon after the date of that letter but their complexion was bad, and I am afraid without great amendment Mr Johnston must be superseded.

They are on James River much short of the supposed collections, consequently the *Ocean* is far from being provided for. Mr Henderson advises that he is endeavouring to charter part of her burthen, but he had not succeeded there on the 3rd inst. and tobacco was very scarce.

The inspection ends today. The quantity at the two warehouses in this town will not exceed 2,000 hogsheads of which upwards of 600 are private crops. This is not one half of what was taken last year and at Dumfries I believe they fall equally short. From hence you will judge the extent of the collections on Rappahannock and Potomac. I do not know for certain what Mr Likely may collect, but it is more than probable we shall not have 300 hogsheads on either river. Tobacco will be very scarce, what was for sale in the merchants' hands has been chiefly sold. The last buyer was Gavin Hamilton for a ship of Dunlop and Wilson; he gave eleven shillings sterling for 50 hogsheads to William Love, payable in October, at which price any that is now for sale is held. From this situation, from your limit, and my own opinion of the worth of tobacco, it is almost certain that the *Neptune*, *Venus* or *Cochrane* must lie for the new crop, the prospect for which continues favourable having had fine rains since the first of the month.

Under cover you have copy of an Association entered into by the delegates from the different counties met at Williamsburg which must be looked upon as the sense of Virginia. But as this agreement has references to the General Congress to meet at Philadelphia the first Monday of next month nothing conclusive can be determined on till then. I also enclose the postscript to the *Pennsylvania Gazette* containing the resolves of that government and instructions to the Assembly to choose deputies for the Congress



and what they wish to be the conduct of these deputies. In this you will observe they propose a line to be drawn betwixt Great Britain and the colonies to settle the present unhappy dispute and to prevent any in future. I think you will be of opinion with me that this is an exceeding well wrote piece, that the proposal is necessary for the welfare of the countries and therefore you will do what you can on these principles to further so salutary a work as that of reconciliation. 17th Yesterday I drew on you in favour of George Mitchell for £100 payable in Glasgow at 60% on account of Falmouth store which please to pay. The weather continues as favourable as could be wished but tobacco for sale is scarce, the demand brisk, and the price asked 15s. currency.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co. per the *William*

Falmouth 29th August 1774

Since writing you the 10th inst. by the *Bogle* and *Britannia* I have not been favoured with any of yours. In a postscript to the copy of that letter I mentioned having drawn on you the 16th in favour of George Mitchell for £100 stg. which I confirm and have now further to advise of drawing another bill for £100 in his favour the 23rd. They are both payable in Glasgow at sixty days sight and on account of Falmouth store. I hope they will meet with due honour; the produce is to answer some engagements which I want discharged prior to the delivery of the store to Mr Colquhoun and with an intent to provide some money before the commencement of the new inspection. In pursuance of this intention I may continue to draw as offers are made, that we may then be able to purchase tobacco for money from the planter, from whom I think it may be procured on more favourable terms than from the merchant.

We had here the 23rd and 24th fine rain which had every appearance of being general, but advices since hear that it did not reach so far as was expected. Indeed the rains through the whole summer have been partial so that it is not uncommon in the distance of a mile for one plantation to be too wet and the other suffering with drought. Hence accounts are various of the situation of the tobacco crop, and it is difficult to draw a conclusion. I shall here take a view of these advices promising what I have already advised

you of this quarter: that during the month of June the unrended quality of tobacco was planted in the back counties on this side of the ridge adjoining Rappahannock and Potomac. The weather during the month of July was various, dry in some places but not so much so in Prince William, Fauquier and Culpepper as we were at the falls. About the beginning of August we had fine rains here, when it appears in some parts of those counties they were rather dry. I should think the complaints of drought are for the most diverted by the rain on the 23rd and 24th. The tobacco to the southward was planted much about the same time with ours. The 13th July Mr Henderson writes that the season was promising and generally speaking has been so since the frost. That in Goochland they had suffered much for want of rain and in that county they seemed to think there was a general drought, which is far from being the case as the planters agree that their prospect for another crop is favourable. 12th August: we have had for a week past an appearance of fine rain all round, and everywhere I have been (Hanover and Williamsburg) there has been plenty of rain; 17th: The drought has continued so long in Hanover, Louisa, the upper end of Herries, Goochland, Cumberland, Prince Edward, Dinwiddie and Brunswick that the prospect for the crop on the field is very indifferent in those counties, though I am apt to think rains have been very general of late and they have made an alteration.

About the middle of July Mr Gordon went out to Mecklenburg and advertised on his return that the prospect for a crop where he had been was very good. J. Bartlett in his letter of the 18th July advises that the weather has been hitherto favourable, but for eight days past people on the low grounds complain with justice of too much rain. Almost everybody planted full crops of tobacco who planted any; some have declined cultivating it altogether, and contrary to custom great crops of grain will be raised.

R. Kennan advises 20th July: from the 25th till the 5th inst., the weather was very seasonable so every person had an opportunity of planting their crop. Since the 5th we have had little or no rain, at this time it is much wanted. 19th August: the weather has been uncommonly seasonable for some time past; at present the general complaint is too much rain. In the back countries (he was just returned from Carolina) the crops have been much hurt by the

dry weather for some time past though generally recovered from frequent rains in the time of my going out and returning.

From these accounts of the situation of the crop and after being informed that there are unnumerable swarms of horn worms which infest and destroy the plant I leave you to form a conclusion of the probable quantity that may be made. For my own part I would argue in this manner; generally what was intended was planted in good time all over the colony. The quantity is not so considerable as what has been for some years past. Tobacco is a hardy plant and after it has taken with the hill, hot dry weather may stunt its growth but will not generally kill it entirely and as the rains have been fleeting I presume there is scarce any place which has had a proportion since the first of August, and therefore should no subsequent disaster happen the probability is that the greatest part of what was planted will come to the house, but not early. What it may yield is uncertain; I should think not less than 50,000 hogsheads.

Surely from the appearance of the coming crop hitherto no person can purchase tobacco at the prices which have been given on speculation? I would think it rather proceeds from the number of ships employed in the trade which, as the store collections have fallen much short of what was expected, have created the demand. Be that as it may, everybody is on the catch for tobacco; there is little for sale and what is in the merchants' hands held up at very high prices. Can you believe that our sellers here ask twelve shillings and sixpence stg.? On James River, Elbeck, Ross and Co. and the Speirs Company are buying all they can lay their hands on. Those last gentlemen bought lately from Henderson and McCall's factors 150 hogsheads at 16s. 8d. ready pay. This it is supposed was the refuse of their collections. Mr Henderson has not yet completed the *Ocean's* load, neither can I say what will be wanted after the store collections have been put on board. He had the 17th inst. purchased on (c) account about 135 hogsheads, 30 of which from I. Henry on Grays Creek at 9s. 9½d. stg. in October, 53 by Mr Horsburgh from three good planters who promise to deal with him at 18s. currency, half payable now and half in October, and 40 hogsheads bought at Goochland Court the 15th from one Pleasants, a merchant, at 18s. These are high prices and it is extremely unlucky

that the demand should be so brisk at this time, as it greatly increases the planters' expectation, and may be the cause of prices breaking too high on the commencement of the new purchase.

We are far from being prepared on Rappahannock and Potomac to load a ship in each river with the old crop. They must therefore lie to be filled up with the new, as no purchase can be made from the merchants on reasonable terms.

You will have observed in the copy of the Virginia Association that it avows an intention to refrain from growing tobacco. In consequence the leading men are discouraging the raising of any. What effect this may have is uncertain, as is the stoppage of our exports at the end of next inspection.<sup>1</sup> But you will no doubt avail yourselves of both intentions in your sales.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co.

Falmouth 15th September 1774

Annexed you have copy of what I wrote you the 29th inst. by the *William* to which I refer. The day before yesterday I was favoured with your letter of the first of July by the *Jeanie*. I am glad to hear that the *Neptune*, *Venus* and *Cochrane* have got home; I observe they were destined to return, the first to James River, the second to Rappahannock and the last to Potomac. As the *Ocean* was ordered to James River it would have been more suitable had the *Cochrane* been allotted for that river as she in all probability will be the last arriving, and they are totally unprepared for the reception of any until the new crop is brought to the warehouses. But I suppose you had in view the sending out goods, or to accommodate Captain Morris who wants to go to Carolina to look after some old affairs. Neither is full provision made for the *Venus* and *Cochrane* on Rappahannock and Potomac but as they cannot be here before the last of the month or middle of next the deficiency will, I hope, be made up from the new purchase without their being detained long in the country, which I apprehend is more advisable than to have purchased tobacco at the price going,

<sup>1</sup> The Virginia Convention of August, 1774 established an association binding subscribers not to import British products after 1 November, 1774 and to cease exporting tobacco after 10 August, 1775 if England did not come to terms

especially when those prices far exceed your limit, when the situation of the crop on the ground in my opinion would not justify the exceeding of it and when the circumstance of public affairs requires great caution in engagements for money.

The sellers in the country who have any tobacco for sale keep it up at the prices quoted in my last. However, I hope they will not meet with purchasers. R. Donald from Warwick was this way lately in quest of tobacco but he would not give more than eleven shillings sterling and did not buy any that I heard of. A. Henderson from Colchester bought the transfer tobacco<sup>1</sup> at Dumfries and Quantico warehouses last week at thirteen shillings currency and I am advised that this kind of tobacco on upper James River sold exceeding high. All this indicates that the present exportation will not be so large as what was expected and there is a suspicion of prices rising here on the commencement of the new inspection. Be that as it may, I think advices from Europe and the prospect for the coming crop will not warrant any purchasers buying at the high prices given on speculation. Since writing you last the weather has been exceeding favourable, there having been several fine rains which have been of vast service to the tobacco; that which was stunted and turning yellow has thereby recovered surprisingly and promises to come to the house in due time and be of good quantity.

By this opportunity you will receive the inventories from Falmouth, Fauquier and Culpepper. I have, agreeable to what I formerly mentioned, delivered to Mr Colquhoun the management of Falmouth store, but delay advertising the collection of the debts until the determination of the General Congress is known relative to exports. I do this more especially as our Courts of Justice continue to decline the trial of any civil action. This I am afraid they will do until public affairs are resettled, it having been, as I am informed, secretly concluded by the delegates from the counties at the late convention so to do, at least until the fee bill<sup>2</sup> be renewed. In such a situation it would I think be rather hazardous to attempt the proposed plan as it is to be doubted many would dispose of what

<sup>1</sup> Loose tobacco insufficient to fill another hogshead completely during the process of inspection at the warehouses

<sup>2</sup> The schedule of fees to be charged in judicial proceedings had to be regularly re-enacted and in the absence of such authority no fees could be charged or business transacted

crops they raise to other merchants knowing that there is no law immediately to take hold of them. After I hear of the determination of the Congress I shall write you fully what we resolve on. Meanwhile we are endeavouring to get our books ready for balancing, settling as many accounts with the debtors as we have an opportunity.

I am sorry to hear that the exporters of wheat last year must be so considerable sufferers. We did not endorse any bills at the meeting, having received payments for what we sold in current money. But I have no doubt of Willing and Morris's standing. I apprehend a great proportion of what they shipped was on commission and it is said they made great gain on a purchase early in the year. We had a northward merchant, one Hill, settled here last June; he retailed rum at very low prices and takes payment in wheat. He now allows four shillings repayment of those debts, and gives money at the same rate. However the price is not yet established and I apprehend purchasers in general will be backward coming to market.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co. per the *Glencairn*, *Fanny* & *Cochrane*

Falmouth 28th September 1774

On the 19th inst. I was favoured with your letter of the 20th July by the *Venus*, and on the 21st copy thereof by the *Cochrane*, these ships being safely arrived at Hobbs Hole and Quantico, as is the *Neptune* in James River.

You already know that full provision was not made for the *Venus* or *Cochrane* on Rappahannock or Potomac. On the former river the collections fall upwards of 120 hogsheads short of the *Venus* burthen and she must lie until the deficiency can be collected of the new crop. On Potomac we wanted 150 hogsheads for the *Cochrane* which I have agreed to take on charter from Mr Robert Findlay<sup>1</sup> on these terms. He is to put the tobacco alongside at his expense in thirty days from the 22nd inst., failing which to be

<sup>1</sup> 1748-1802; Son of Robert Findlay, Professor of Divinity at Glasgow University and nephew of William Cuninghame. 'Bred to business' by Alexander Cuninghame and assumed a partner in his firm in 1773. Eventually became managing partner of this house, reconstituted as Cuninghame, Findlay and Co. Signet Library, Edinburgh, Sessional Papers, 162/23

subjected to the customary demurrage, to pay the country duties for the tobacco and for freight at the rate of five pounds and ten shillings sterling at two or three months after delivery on the keys of Port Glasgow.

I was induced to sell this much of the ship's burthen for these reasons: we had not a sufficiency of tobacco for her load; none could be bought from the merchant on reasonable terms or to correspond with your limit, and in all probability it will require the whole month of November to collect that quantity in the stores of the new inspection which would occasion the ship to be detained too long in the country, especially as it will take the intermediate time from her leaving this place until her return to collect a sufficiency for her then immediate dispatch. And expedition now and then is absolutely necessary in view of her making a second trip before the time allotted for the stoppage of our exports.

The terms are low when it is considered that you will be burthened with the expense of entering and clearing at the Maryland office. But low as they are I think it was more prudent to accept them than to have let the ship lain for the new crop as, exclusive of the above considerations, our not being pushed with shipping in the fall will be an advantage in fixing the store price and should the collections turn out better than expectation, some may be spared from that river for the *Cunninghame* which will be wanted. On these accounts I hope you will approve of the measure.

The *Neptune* must lie in James River until she can be provided for from the new crop. The *Venus* I hope may be loaded in Rappahannock should the inspection be forwarded in all next month. I would now go fully into the contents of your letter relative to the plan of shipping for the ensuing purchase but it is needless until the determination of the General Congress is known, of whose notions nothing has yet transpired. I postpone this the more readily as the quantity of the crop is not yet determined and as I presume the *Ocean* will be sent straight out there will be no other destinations until those ships now arrived return.

Since writing you last we have had some cold weather, one or two slight frosts in the morning but not to do any damage. On the whole it has been favourable to the later tobacco. It will still require some time before the whole is ripe, but I have little dread

of a frost doing any hurt for ten or fifteen days when it will be chiefly housed. If so I remain of opinion there will be 50,000 hogsheads made and I apprehend the quality will be exceeding good.

The *Ocean's* load will give no favourable idea of the collections of Petersburg store and its dependancies. 73 hogsheads being an exceeding small quantity from three stores, especially as Mr Gordon had not shipped any great deal in the former ships. You have under cover copy of a letter from Mr Bartlett containing the reason of his purchase being so short. I have never heard from Mr Johnstone and am at a real loss to account for his conduct. His purchase has I suspect been under 50 hogsheads! This from a man who expected 260 is too much. It is to me full conviction that there can be no dependence on what he says and that reproving him is as fruitless as any attempt whatever. I did therefore write Mr Henderson the 7th inst. as follows: 'The Petersburg collection and its dependant back stores falls much short of expectation; J. Bartlett has I think accounted for his deficiency in a satisfactory manner, but what can be said of Johnstone? His, I am afraid, arises from mismanagement. It is to me surprising that this young man after acknowledging his former faults should still continue the same conduct as it would appear he does, from the shortness of this year's purchase, from his not writing us any account of his transactions through the year, and from his not disposing of the farm or stock, or assigning the smallest reason for his not doing it. As I wrote you before, I think Mr Horsburgh, if he is able to ride, and if he is not, that you should as soon as possible go to the store and examine minutely into his conduct. If you think it such as to render his continuance unpardonable give him notice that he is not to continue longer than six months in the company's service during which time he is to settle and adjust every account with the respective debtors to the first instant, on which day a new manager must date his transactions. Who this manager may be I leave to your determination promising that if any of Mr Gordon's assistants are thought capable of the charge they ought to be preferred. However I would hope you will find the business in such order and he will be able to exculpate himself in such a manner as to render the change unnecessary. If he is continued lay strong injunctions on him to push



the collection in the fall; if he is not, you will furnish his successor with full directions'.

In reply Mr Henderson wrote that he could not at that time go to Mecklenburg and by a note I received last night from Petersburg I find Mr Horsburgh in a very low, dangerous way. He had gone to the country to try if change of air could be of any service to him, but his doctor it is said seems to be apprehensive if he should get the better of his indisposition he will not be able to do any business this winter. This is an exceeding unfavourable circumstance for that store should he be carried off. I do not know in what manner his place could be supplied. Mr Henderson was expected there from Cabin Point to regulate the business during his absence. I long much to hear from him on this and other subjects of which I shall advise in my next.

Everything is dull here at present. I have not heard of any sales of tobacco lately; indeed there is not much on hand. What the store price may open at is uncertain.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co. per the *Cochrane*

Falmouth 14th October 1774

Since writing you the 28th inst. of which you will receive a second copy herewith, I have seen Mr Henderson and with his concurrence have fixed on the following estimate of collections and plan of shipping for the ensuing purchases:<sup>1</sup>

Whether the amount of the collections with the limit in money (the same as last year) may reach the estimated quantity I know not. From the opinion I entertain of the crop I think they will if no accident happen to it in the house and provided it is all brought to the Inspection. Considering every circumstance I believe you will think I have been moderate on the calculation for Rappahannock and Potomac. We have been much disappointed last year in our expectations; at Falmouth alone I came near to 200 hogsheads which have been kept from the inspection, and this will continue to be the case while tobacco bears a low price.

At Richmond, the purchase will continue small until some favourable occurrence takes place as pointed out in yours now

<sup>1</sup> See table on p. 161

Stores	Rappahannock	Potomac	James River	Total of Collection	Ships	When to Arrive	Rappahannock	Potomac	James River	Total Required For Shipping
Falmouth	750	500		1,250	<i>Venus</i>	Sept.	120			
Culpeper				900	<i>Neptune</i>	Oct.			460	
Fredericksburg	900	550		550	<i>Cunninghame</i>	Nov.	500		600	
Dumfries		550	450	450	<i>Ocean</i>	Feb.				
Richmond & Amherst			250	250	<i>Cochrane</i>	March		450		
Rockyridge				920	<i>Venus</i>	April	470			
Petersburg, Mecklenburg & Halifax			920	920	<i>Venus</i>	May			460	
Cabinpoint & Brunswick			500	500	<i>Neptune</i>					
Deficient of ships' burthen				4,820	<i>Cunninghame</i>	June	500		600	
				260	<i>Ocean</i>	Aug.				
				5,080	<i>Cochrane</i>	Oct.	470	450		
				5,080	<i>Venus</i>	Oct.				
	1,650	1,050	2,120	5,080			2,060	900	2,120	5,080

before me. But that at Amherst will increase considerably. Mr Lumpkin is informed that he will be furnished in money to pay his customers for the balance of their crops after discharging the debts they may owe at the store. If so he is of opinion that he may buy 400 hogsheads and that £1,200 stg. will be sufficient in money to carry through the purchase. However in case of disappointments we have fixed both stores at 450. At the same time good tobacco may be generally bought at Richmond for money but the price will undoubtedly exceed 12s. 6d. stg. It is more than probable the store price will break at 18s. currency; there was near 7,000 hogsheads taken last year at Byrds and Shockoe and it is generally thought the present crop in that quarter will not be much short of last.

At Rocky Ridge there is some expectation that the purchase may be 300 hogsheads and the limit in money not exceeded. However to be within bounds I have fixed it at 250. The store appears to be in a thriving situation. Petersburg: Mr Horsburgh continues very ill of the rheumatism and at present is unable to do any business. But as the two assistants are clever and attentive the business may go on with his afflictions. The quantity of the purchase is very uncertain; it may be around 500 hogsheads. Mecklenburg: From Mr Johnston's conduct it is absolutely necessary to supersede him, his management having been bad, and much is to be dreaded from a factor who will not attend to orders, or represent matters as they really are. I sent A. [blank] to take charge who I hope on trial will be found qualified for it. He is to be at Petersburg the first of next month when Mr Henderson or I on returning from Williamsburg will accompany him to the store to take the goods and accounts out of Mr Johnston's hands, as I think he should only be continued in the employ six months to settle and adjust the accounts with the debtors to the first of September inst. However it may perhaps on the spot be found necessary to continue him for the whole time of the purchase. I have fixed that purchase at 160 hogsheads but I am very doubtful what it may be. Halifax: I hope Mr Bartlett will conduct the business in a proper manner; he wants an assistant to supply Robinson's place who is to leave him next year and who he says he cannot depend on. I should think this year's purchase cannot be less than 260 hogsheads as fixed in the calculation. Cabin Point:

Mr Kennan has good assistants. His books are, it is said, regularly kept up and the business in proper order. He has the prospect from Mr Glassford's store being moved of increasing the sales, and should be well supplied with goods, of which I make no doubt he will make a proper use. His ensuing purchase and collections of the debts at the dependant stores cannot be less than 500 hogsheads.

On the whole I think the respective factors may implement their quotas without exceeding your limit in bills. But it will be necessary to draw for some part of that limit at the General Court which will further the collections. For that purpose we proposed to furnish each principal store with a sum of money not exceeding £200 stg. with directions not to advance any to any person but to levy it out for the above purchase and for buying tobacco for ready pay which we suppose may be done at the warehouses at Richmond and Rocky Ridge from 16s. 8d. to 18s.; Petersburg at 16s. 8d. and Cabin Point at 12s. 6d. If purchases can be made at these prices more money must be thrown into their hands through the year and should that money exceed the respective limits the tobacco purchased with the overplus is to be taken on the (c) account.

— In this plan of proceeding I have taken no notice of your scheme of employing a small vessel to go to Hull. As stemmed tobacco is in much demand here and as it is generally late before it is brought to the inspection we will have very little so early in February. If you should therefore prosecute such a trade the month of August will be the proper time for the vessels arriving here. We shall reserve our stem tobacco, but should you send this year, an equivalent to her burthen must be bought with cash on James River. The deficiency in the provision necessary for your present shipping in the foregoing is on Rappahannock. Should the exports continue open to a later period than the 10th August, this deficiency must be made up on the (c) account but should they be then stopped, I much doubt whether the *Venus* can return from her spring voyage to be loaded in time. We are still in the dark with regard to this matter; nothing has yet transpired from the Congress but a request to the merchants and others in several colonies not to send to Great Britain any orders for goods, and to direct the execution of all orders already sent to be delayed or suspended until the sense of the Congress on the means to be taken for the preservation

of the liberty of America is made public, which you will please to attend to.

What collections we may make in wheat is uncertain as is the price it may break at. We shall endeavour to dispose of what we do collect in the country.

The crop of tobacco I apprehend is generally housed but I have no doubt of the quantity of next exportation reaching 50,000 hogsheads. The inspection will be backward here.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co. per the *Susannah* via London and the *Boyd* via Glasgow

Williamsburg 1st November 1774

About one half of these who signed the agreement to meet here the 25th inst. came according to that agreement. But there are few others yet in town; of course no business can be done, neither can it be said when it will be done. Thus we are again dupes to an obligation which it would appear is not paid much regard to.

The Congress is at length broke up. Their determinations are not as yet fully made public. In general it is known that they have drawn up a Bill of Rights to assert American liberty. They have also entered into an Association which with regard to trade is nearly similar to the Virginia one. Imports are to be stopped the first of December next and exports the first or tenth of September both to and from Great Britain and the West Indies. Indeed all exports are to be stopped at that time except rice from South Carolina and wheat from the other provinces to the Mediterranean.

As soon as these determinations are published I shall send you a copy. Meanwhile you will see in what situation your effects and debts lie here. The consequence unless a reconciliation takes place early next Spring is dreadful to think of, and must point out to you in what manner to act in endeavouring to effect such a reconciliation as may be agreeable. We must here for obvious reasons join in the measures proposed by the Congress; to act contrary thereto would be imprudent in us and dangerous to your property.

The stoppage of the exports of tobacco unhinges the plan of proceeding during the purchase. What effect it will have on the

price I know not, but it will be absolutely necessary that we push for collections, and I think at present purchases for money should be avoided as much as possible even although you should withdraw one ship in the plan of shipping as mentioned in my letter of the 14th inst. 7th Nov. Under cover you will please receive a *Virginia Gazette* containing what of the proceedings of the Congress as are as yet published to which I refer. There is as yet no business done here.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co. per the *Venus*

Falmouth 16th November 1774

Since writing you the first inst. by the *Susannah* via London and *Boyd*, I have drawn on you sundry bills agreeable to the following list, which please to honour.

On account of Falmouth and Fredericksburg stores:

Nov. 12th	in favour of John Glassell payable London at 60%	£50	
" "	Arch. Govern "	334	
" "	Robert Sheddon "	" "	200
" "	James Somerville "	137 16s. 3d.	
" "	James Manny "	100	
		<hr/>	
		£621 16s. 3d.	£200

The Exchange was current at 35 per cent at which Mr Hanson drew very considerably. At the same time, while I stayed in town, money did not appear to be plentiful and I am led to believe that had the moneyed men acted with their usual discernment the rate of exchange might have been fixed at 30 per cent. But I suppose they were afraid of not being able to procure bills as they had been scarce at the close of last meeting, and it was known there were few contracts for many to perform. Whether this rise in exchange will greatly affect the price of tobacco I am not certain as it is not always, as you observe in your letter of the 13th August by the *Cuninghame*, that traders can govern their purchases by so good a rule. Other causes I am much afraid than the rise of the exchange will make the prices for tobacco exceeding high in all parts of the colony. The great demand and high prices at the close of last purchase is one cause. The present crop, it is allowed, will not be a short one, but the fall has been very dry, that little could be brought to the inspection. Of course, the purchase will be later,

which as tobacco is generally wanted is another and the great probability of our exports being stopped next September will make every person who has debts in the country anxious to receive payment even by allowing an extra price for the commodity. Besides, as the Provincial Association avows a fixed determination of not cultivating tobacco, and as it seems to be a received opinion that what of that Association is not altered by the Continental Congress is binding on the Virginians, there will be in all probability little planted next spring. This will occasion some London or other merchants to purchase largely on speculation. These causes joined to the unwillingness of the planter to part with their tobacco will occasion the price to break high. Mr Hanson, who has established a warehouse at Petersburg for the purpose of stemming tobacco, was buying at that warehouse from the planters at 18s. before he came to Williamsburg. This, as I am informed, made that price current in town which price, although it is in my opinion too high, there is a probability of its being exceeded as Mr Farr declared in town that he would allow 20s. The other prices in the colony hang greatly on what is given at Petersburg as the price of the lower is generally regulated at three shillings per hundred less and the upper, meaning Warwick, Rocky Ridge and Richmond, at two shillings more than what is given there. Of course, should the price at Petersburg be established at 18s., the lower will be from 14s. to 15s. and the upper at 20s. These are the very lowest prices that I have any idea of at present, at which there must be a considerable loss to the exporter, unless you can raise the prices in Europe. The quantity of last year exportation is as follows:

Upper district of James River	26,187
Lower   "       "       "	1,817
York	7,353
Rappahannock	14,244
Potomac	9,248
Accomac	1
	<hr/>
	58,850
Free bottoms	3,262
	<hr/>
	62,112

This exportation is less than the preceeding year by 7,475 hogsheads but I am afraid it will occasion no scarcity. What will chiefly avert you in raising the price is the presumption that the ensuing exportation will fall 10 or 12,000 hogsheads short of the last, the probability of little being planted next spring and a stoppage of our exports in September. Of this last taking place I think there is an absolute certainty, unless the Acts of Parliament which are complained of are repealed. And I would hope from such a prospect you will be able to sell what tobacco you may import to advantage. Of this you will consider from the preceeding view of prices in the country. Indeed I am afraid you may estimate upper James River from 20s. to 22s. 6d., Accomac from 18s. to 20s. and mean tobacco in every other part of the colony from 14s. to 16s. 8d. I say you will consider if money can be made at those probable prices and if you think of purchasing at them give orders in return as they far exceed your present limit. I must also take notice that our present situation being without law it is very doubtful if the collection will be *perfected* as mentioned in my letter of the 14th October. I then expected the fee bill would be renewed at the Assembly meeting this month but as they in consequence of the governors not being returned from the army are prorogued to the first of February it is otherwise, and the planters avail themselves thereof by keeping their tobacco from the warehouses, and by making great demands for money for what they do bring notwithstanding that they are in general so very considerably in debt.

I say in this situation it is very doubtful if the collections can be made with the limit in money you have prescribed. It may therefore be necessary for you to withdraw one or more of your ships and to assign such destinations to the others that they may arrive here when we are fully provided for them. On the whole when I reflect on the magnitude of your debts here, and the situation you may be in on the stoppage of our exports I would give it as my opinion that it will be better for you to be on the collecting plan entirely this year and so forego any advantage that may be made by a speculative purchase.

Notwithstanding that the above is my opinion, that there should be no considerable cash purchase made, yet, from your having fixed on the Hull plan, and from the probability of the *Ocean* and



the vessel for that place being both in James River at a time, there will be a necessity of making a purchase on that River through the winter after trying what can be done in the collecting way. At present there is none in the hands of the merchants for sale. As I before observed should you send out the vessel for Hull, she cannot at that early season be loaded with any quantity of stem. There is no old to be bought and there is little inspected so early in the year. The time therefore should be the close of the inspection. But even then, from the universal demand there is for that kind of tobacco, we cannot pick up any considerable quantity, not sufficient I am afraid to make it worth your while to prosecute the trade. If the vessel comes out, I wish you may be full in your directions for should we be able only to procure a small quantity of stem (and I should think it will be under 50 hogsheads) we shall be at a loss without instructions whether to send her to Hull or not. Indeed as the quantity of stem will be so very inconsiderable it might then be prudent to load her with grain to the Mediterranean or charter her for some of those ports that she might return at the close of inspection for the stem then on hand. Of all which, should this reach you in time, please to advise.

Mr Henderson has written you by this opportunity fully relative to the proceedings of the Associators at Williamsburg and to him I beg leave to refer on that head, only observing that the merchants have acceded to the Association formed by the Congress of which I have sent you a copy.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co. per the *Mercury*

Falmouth 7th December 1774

I have not been favoured with any of yours since my letter of the 16th inst. Under cover you will please receive Bill of Lading for 479 hogsheads tobacco shipped on board the *Venus*, with Capt. Wilson's bill on you in my favour for £45 3s. 8d. stg. which with £67 8s. 2d. for craft hire and 176 hogsheads = 179,392 lbs tobacco, is to be applied to the credit of Falmouth store agreeable to what Mr Reid wrote you by the ship.

There is not anything very material happened in the tobacco market since I wrote you last. The weather has been exceeding dry,

which as it has prevented tobacco from coming, is the cause so little has been hitherto brought to the warehouses. We have not more than 300 hogsheads at the inspections in this town and the neighbouring ones fall in a like manner short of their usual quantity which is very unlucky considering we have the *Cuninghame* to load from the collections. It is also unlucky on another account, that is in fixing the price. We are labouring to have it established at fourteen shillings for leaf at Fredericksburg, Falmouth and Dumfries in which I hope we shall be successful. But I have some doubts on this head as I am informed the price in the stores on Accomac and upper James and York Rivers will be 20s. which may regulate the others in the colony in the manner I wrote in my last.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co. by the *Aeolus*, Capt. Rankin

Falmouth 8th January 1775

On the 10th inst. I was favoured with Mr Cuninghame's letters of the 29th September and 28th October and since then I have received the original of the former by the packet and copy thereof by the *Warwick*.

When I consider the enormous quantity of tobacco that has been exported from Virginia for four years past and the probability of the present exportation not being a short one I am greatly at a loss to account for the rise of the market in Europe. It is only to be equated by the rise here at the beginning of the inspection before any advices of the price at foreign markets could reach us.

Immediately on receipt of the letter above mentioned I sent over an express to James River with copy thereof that Mr Henderson and the other factors on that river might avail themselves of the intelligence. But they can do little in consequence thereof at the prices mentioned as saving ones. The price of twenty shillings offered by Mr Jabb and Mr Hanson at Petersburg early in November soon became to be generally offered by the other merchants in that place, and this price being so considerably more than the last year's one it has had the effect of raising the planter's expectations. They refuse to deliver what they do inspect at those warehouses at 20s.; some insisting on 22s. 6d. (or 25s.) and at the same time refusing to give up a hogshead on any uncertainty, even at the

market price in the summer which has been the usual method of buying tobacco there.

It has also, as I supposed the 16th November, had an effect on the lower market as the planters who carry their tobacco to those houses will not part with it unless they get within 2s. 6d. of hundred of the Petersburg price. R. Kennan writes that he has given 16s. 8d. but that few will sell at that price, some asking 18s. and others 20s.; the latter from a report of 22s. 6d. being the price in Petersburg and the former on account of 20s. being currently given there. The price on upper James River is not yet higher than 20s. but it is to be feared that and every other in the colony will hear their proportion to what is allowed at Petersburg.

You know that the fall has been exceeding dry. There was no season for bringing tobacco in until the first of last month. Of course, there is but a small proportion inspected; what is brought to the warehouses is sought after with great avidity, which keeps up the planters' expectation, and as they cannot be compelled to do their creditors' justice they have no other call for selling than wanting to make a purchase which is not commonly to be met with at present. This is a disagreeable circumstance regarding the loading of the *Neptune* and *Cuninghame*.

Mr Henderson on receipt of my letter took a tour amongst the lower merchants but it was not attended with success. None of them had tobacco on hand except John Hay and Joseph Scott who held it at 16s. 8d. currency, bills in April. Each of their quantity did not exceed 20 hogsheads but they would have agreed to make up 50 each in a short time. As this price exceeded your limit and the quantity small he thought it prudent not to be over anxious about it. Mr Cunnison had bought tobacco in that quarter at 12s. bills at 90 per cent ready for the *Jean* which ship Buchanan and Hastie<sup>1</sup> had chartered and she had been on demurrage<sup>2</sup> for some time. It is presumed this was the reason for Mr Cunnison's giving such an extravagant price so early and before he could have any encouragement for so doing. Be that as it may his giving that

<sup>1</sup> A Glasgow tobacco house with at least eight stores in Virginia. Went bankrupt in December, 1777. SRO, Currie Dal sequestrations, B1/1 (1777)

<sup>2</sup> An allowance made by merchants to the master of a ship for his staying in port longer than the time agreed upon for his departure

price has buoyed them all up in their expectations of getting still more. I think the merchants of Petersburg have fixed the price of 20s. on themselves in discount of debts this year. Hanson gives that price at his factory sales and 18s. money at the warehouses. As this is the case there is little probability of lower tobacco being bought on better terms than 16s. 8d. and it is to be feared upper tobacco, Richmond, Rocky Ridge and Warwick will rise. Messrs Speirs and Company's factors are on the catch to purchase at all their settlements and Mr Tom Inglis has been with the sellers in the country on James, Appomatox and Nansimond Rivers endeavouring to purchase tobacco. He offered 20s. for upper James River and acquainted Mr Morris of Richmond that he wanted 2,000 hogsheads.

This is a full state from my advices in what manner the trade is situated on James River. On considering it I wrote Mr Henderson the 4th inst.

From the quantity of the exportation for four years past the rise of tobacco in Europe cannot be accounted for in any other than a speculative plan. This we know may subside and the actors become considerable sufferers from this year's exportation turning out sufficient for the ordinary sales. But be that as it may, I think from the increasing demand for tobacco and the prospect of our public affairs, the now ruling prices in the colony will not be less during the inspection and we are under an absolute necessity of making preparation for the shipping expected into James River early this spring. I give it as my opinion that you should purchase for money a quantity so as with the store collections to give these ships dispatch on the best terms you can, avoiding any measure or operation that may have a tendency of raising the prices, and redressing the amount of such purchase where it is practicable without evident loss to sterling, as it is very doubtful what the rate of exportation may be in April. This is my opinion and although in executing it you will in all probability be obliged to give a higher price than the company's limit you will be justified from the nature of the case. For if more ships are sent in than can be loaded from the store collections they must be filled up on the best terms in our power, as no order of the kind can be literally complied with. But we must take care not to be imprudent in the transaction.

You are apprehensive that tobacco on upper James River will

rise; prudence in that case dictates that you should buy what you can at the present price. I should think there is little probability of the price rising higher at Petersburg, it is already much too high for the general run of the qualities at these inspections. However Mr Horsburgh should exert himself to make his collection as large as possible at the current price, and to purchase for money at 18s. which you say Hanson gives. You ask what I think of giving 16s. 8d. for lower tobacco; I answer I would not if it could be avoided and if there was any chance of buying it for less. As it is, I believe it would be prudent to accept Hay's and Scott's quantity which you say may be settled at 35 per cent. At the same time I think they will take 12s. bills.

In consequence of this opinion your factors on James River will be on the outlook to purchase for money what tobacco may be wanted for the dispatch of the *Neptune*, *Ocean* and *Hull* vessels. But from the backwardness of the inspection and the unwillingness of the planters to part with their tobacco it will not be much even at the prices cited above for some time. There is little, as I have observed, in the hands of the merchants.

You seem to think that the prices in Europe will not decline; if so a purchase might answer at ours, which and the absolute necessity we stand in for tobacco is the reason for my writing Mr Henderson in the manner I have.

On Rappahannock before any advice reached us of the rise in Europe, the merchants in Fredericksburg and Falmouth agreed not to exceed fourteen shillings per hundred for leaf tobacco unless any future occasion should make it necessary. This at the time was judged to be its full value. On sounding the purchasers of Dumfries we found the principal ones, except Mr Riddell,<sup>1</sup> were willing to come into the measure. He objected thereto from being in great want of tobacco for the *Jeanie* loading at Quantico and from then having given or offered more than what was proposed. At the same time he declared he would be of no prejudice to the agreement. On this being known at Fredericksburg and Falmouth, the merchants, from their being little tobacco for sale and a thorough knowledge that the planters would not part with it at any certain price without having the rise of the market engaged, thought it

<sup>1</sup> John Riddell (?-1794), Factor at Dumfries for Glassford, Gordon, Monteath and Co.

prudent to say little about the price, but not to exceed fourteen shillings for some time. It must rise in the spring unless advices from Europe before then should occasion a reduction of the prices to the southward. At any rate I think it was the best method we could embrace to allay the expectations of the planters. They have been much roused here by the advice of the prices on James River and from various higher ones than fourteen shillings being given on Potomac. A certain Mr Leitch at Dumfries has bought one or two hogsheads at 20s. payable in rum at 3s. 6d. and sugar at 50s. He, I hope, will not be regarded. But what our situation may be in the summer is very alarming, as in all probability the courts of justice will remain shut and the exports cease at the proposed time. The planters will make the most of both by either extorting a high price for their tobacco, or by keeping it up as long as they can. There has been but a small quantity inspected this fall on these two rivers and there is very little in the merchants' hands for sale; what little they have collected they are shipping to Liverpool and London or they will not in a general way dispose of it.

Since the receipt of your letter by the *Houston* and the dispatch of the *Cuninghame*, I have been endeavouring to purchase from them but without much effect. There is no lower Northern Neck tobacco for sale and the situation of the upper merchants is as above: they promise to lend but they will not sell. When Captain Henry may be ready for sea is very uncertain as he has only 229 hogsheads on board, as we still want upwards of 100 hogsheads to complete his load, and as there are 90 hogsheads to be sent round from Potomac. The weather has been very favourable hitherto but there is great danger of the river and creeks being frozen up before the tobacco can be shipped.

I would have written you eight days ago but wanted to advise what could be done in the purchasing way and that it is not anything at present. Receive enclosed copy of two letters from Mecklenburg and Halifax relative to those settlements to which I refer.

Since the breaking up of the General Congress we have had committees chosen in each county in Virginia to observe that the Association is strictly complied with, to whom goods imported since December have been delivered and to whom sold. Some of the committees have resolved to inspect the merchants' books to

know on comparing this year's with last if they have or have not sold goods higher than they did then. The books have been generally refused but when this may end I know not.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co. per the *Cuninghame*

Falmouth 24th January 1775

Since writing you the 8th inst. by the *Aeolus*, Capt. Rankin, I have not been favoured with any of yours. By this opportunity you will please to receive copy of that letter to which I refer, nothing having occurred since the date worthy of notice.

This accompanies the first copy of the states for Falmouth, Fauquier and Culpepper stores for last purchase which I hope you will find free from errors. In the list of outstanding debts at Falmouth store I have fixed remarks on those where there was any alteration from what they were last year but as I have been hurried to get them read for this opportunity I shall go further on this head in the second copy. In the three account currents you are charged with 1,124,783 lbs the average price of which is 9s. 2 $\frac{1}{10}$ d., makes £5,159 13s. 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. stg. This average cost is greatly more than I expected, at which I am much vexed. It proceeds as you will observe chiefly from the highness of the price of purchase at the two out stores. Mr Likely writes you herewith the reason as it appears to him of his being so much higher. It is far from being satisfactory and I am led to believe there must be a considerable error somewhere which will be examined into before the second copy is forwarded. That at Culpepper, I apprehend, proceeds from the smallness thereof not being sufficient to sink the attendant charges which were increased on last purchase by the amount of £10 for board and washing for the preceding year.

On the 20th inst. I drew on you an account of Falmouth store for last purchase as will appear from the account current.

In favour of Mr William Cuninghame	£100
„ „ „ Mr Robert Duthie	34 16s. 5d.
	<hr/>
	134 16s. 5d.

I have also drawn you on the ⟨CA⟩ account as follows viz:

January 20th	In favour of Hislop & Blair, payable London @ 60%	£250
„ 21st	„ „ Andrew Kennies „ „ „	154 16s. 10d.
		<hr/> £404 16s. 10d.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co.

Falmouth 31st March 1775

The *Cochrane*, Capt. Bolton, arrived at Potomac the 9th inst and the *Ocean*, Capt. Ewing, at Hampton the 13th, by whom I have received your favours of the 18th, 23rd, 24th and 29th December, and the 4th and 6th January. They came to hand by express the 10th and 17th and on the 23rd I was further favoured with Mr Cuninghame's letters of the 18th and 19th and 20th January by the *Minerva*, forwarded by express from Williamsburg.

Ere now you will be informed by my letter of the 8th January of the *Aeolus* and *Cuninghame*: that we could not make any purchases for money in consequence of your orders by the *Houston*, proceeding from the backwardness of the inspection, and the unwillingness of the sellers in the country to dispose of their collections in the unsettled state of our public affairs until they knew what they were to give. But for the reasons of our disappointment at large I beg leave to refer you to that letter as well as for the instructions I furnished Mr Henderson in consequence of his not being able to purchase at your limit. He will have written you that on a second trip through the sellers in Nansimond he was unsuccessful, they being swept by Samuel Inglis and others at prices exceeding what you thought were saving ones. As matters now are I am extremely sorry we were disappointed of that tobacco even at Mr Inglis's price of 12s. 6d. stg. or 16s. 8d. currency. He also, about the last of January, bought a quantity from William Beattie and Co. at a very high price which was kept secret. But from hints thrown out by the sellers it was thought not to be less than 18s. stg.

The weather during the winter has been remarkably mild and dry, by that means a considerable quantity of tobacco has been brought to inspection but the planters are so sanguine in their expectations that they will not part with what they do inspect



without having the market engaged. As this is the case there is as yet but little in the merchants' hands, and they still continue in general to refuse to sell until they know what may be the market price. All therefore that could be done in this quarter during the winter was to engage an offer of tobacco when they were disposed to sell.

Immediately on receipt of the letters by the *Cochrane* I forwarded those for James River by express to Mr Henderson which reached him the 12th when I gave him my opinion that he should directly set off and try what could be done, desiring him to purchase all he could at the prices you mention of 12s. 6d. to 16s. stg. depending on quality. If he found he could not do anything at those prices he was to secure from 200 to 500 hogsheads to make up the deficiency in the plan at shipping in the best terms in his power. By return of the express he advised of his intention of setting off the 13th. Since then I have not heard from him.

On enquiry at the sellers in Dumfries, Falmouth and Fredericksburg I found they generally persevered in their former determination not to sell until they were on some certainty relative to the market. Mr Carr offered from 50 to 100 hogsheads Potomac at 16s. stg. at which price he had already sold and Mushett and Lawson 40 hogsheads at 18s. stg.

These prices were so extravagant that on a cool deliberation on your advices and orders by the *Cochrane* and *Ocean* I could not think of accepting them. This was especially so when at that time (the receipt of letter of the *Cochrane*) it was generally thought from the resolution of the Assembly of New York not to take any notice of the late Congress and to appoint no deputies to the next, that it would have prevented that one from meeting and of course, that the exports would remain open, and the other measures in the Association be of no effect as it was thought the neighbouring colonies would not sit still and see the trade vanished from them. At the same time the usual preparation was being made for a crop of tobacco. This prospect I thought made it extremely hazardous to exceed your prices. That the preparation for a crop is as much as usual I am pretty confident. Some of the principal gentlemen in the country may decline raising tobacco until the dispute with Great Britain is settled but I think from the preparation that is generally

making, it would appear the declaration of the August convention took its rise as much from the low price tobacco then bore as from the spirit of patriotism.

As I observed above the winter has been exceeding mild; there is much fresh ground cleared; a great deal of seed sown and we never had a more forward spring. In the back countries I think it may be depended on that endeavour will be used for a full crop. It may not be so on the rivers and I would not say the crop will be so large as that of '71, '72 and '73 but I think it may be safely estimated at 50,000 hogsheads should no accident happen.

Since the receipt of the letters by the *Minerva* we have been informed that the committee of the city of New York keep their ground and that through their means a Convention is called in that government for the express purpose of choosing deputies to attend the Congress. As all the other colonies who sent to the last have already chosen members for the next, I say, as this is the case, it is more than probable the former measures will be adhered to and a stoppage of exports take place unless Parliament should repeal the Acts complained of or profer a general constitution to the colonies on a liberal and equitable plan which seems to be wanted. This alteration in the prospect of affairs joined to the encouraging account of prices in Europe and the pressing manner you write to make a purchase has made me come to the resolution of purchasing at the high price mentioned. I have more readily come into this resolution from considering that when you mentioned that we might go to the length of 12s. 6d. to 16s. you then thought the French would purchase at 2½d. Since then you have asked 3d. and think it will be higher. I have accordingly instructed Mr Cuninghame to accept Mr Carr's parcel for the dispatch of the *Cochrane* and I shall take any that may offer here. In consequence of my application at the same price this will not be much. I have also sent Mr Reid once more down the Northern Neck and to the Virginia eastern shore to try what can be now done there and have written Mr Henderson that I thought he should purchase what upper tobacco he could from 18s. to 19s. stg. and from 17s. 18s. to stg. at Petersburg and even 15s. stg. for Nansimond. I am very anxious to hear what he has done. I apprehend it will not be much from the general alarm all over the country and the causes formerly specified.

From Mr Findlay's advices there is no tobacco for sale in Maryland; he and I have been proposing to attempt a purchase in that government on the Company's joint account, particularly the fine qualities on Patuxent, but I am doubtful anything can be done to the purpose.

On the whole you will observe until it is known what may be purchased for money that I cannot say anything conclusive relative to chartering ships. But I am apprehensive your own may not make two trips agreeable to the plan (which I notice you confirm) before the exportation is stopped. The query you make on that head I shall put to the King George Committee but if they guide themselves by the letter of the Association they cannot give any relief. The Congress alone have that power. Should you therefore find that the *Cochrane*, *Ocean* and *Venus* or either of them do not arrive with you, in such time as they may return and be loaded before the 10th September when they shall meet with dispatch here, I think it would be prudent to charter ships and send them in their stead.

The store purchases are very backward, many of the customers keeping up their tobacco for a higher price than what is now offered. We have been giving in this quarter since the middle of last month 16s. 8d. but the planters expect more, say 20s., which I am afraid it may come to. The want of goods begin to be felt here, particularly coarse linens of all kinds. Some have more than others for sale and they make the most of them, by not selling for anything but tobacco. Your stores on Rappahannock are very bare, and through that means must fall short in the purchase, as the many customers they have will lay out part of their crops for linens while they can be got. The goods ordered from Boston are I presume by the government party; if they are sent they may meet with the same fate as the East India Company's tea unless the King's Ships and forces are authorised to take an active part in preserving them. Indeed this is not to be doubted and as those anti-associators will have it in their power to import goods under such protection they will supply the back parts of the other colonies with abundance which I daresay will be very acceptable to the inhabitants. In the present ferment it would be dangerous to acquaint the planters that you intended to send no more goods to the colony unless the customers would obligate themselves to protect the sale and to

procure a free exportation, as it would be deemed an attempt to stir up the people against the measures of the Congress. Their own feelings, if I mistake not, will soon be more forcible than anything we can say.

In what manner this unnatural and alarming contest betwixt Britain and the colonies may be settled I know not. However, I think it must be settled some way or other in 12 months. Whenever that event happens I have no doubt but large quantities of goods will be poured in from Britain to the tobacco colonies, which will answer them to sell low and be the cause of the same extensive credits being allowed as formerly. This in my opinion will be extremely wrong. At such a period it would be like commencing trade anew. I wish therefore some plan may be adopted to put it on a better footing than it has been for some years past. Goods sold in sterling at a certain advance when they are not paid for in the time agreed on; tobacco bought at an unknown and market price; the extensive credits allowed and enormous sums sunk in debts are amongst others evils which ought to be remedied.

With regard to the first of those I would have you persevere in the measure you have prosecuted for two years past sending only such assortments of goods as may be easily disposed of for ready pay or on a short credit to good men. Should the non-exportation agreement continue longer than this summer the Virginians through necessity will manufacture brown linen and coarse woollens in considerable quantities; if so, those staple articles shipped, on the ports being opened at a later period than I suppose, may not come to a ready sale. I am afraid it is almost impossible to break through the second evil custom complained of, taking tobacco at the market price. The whole trade should join in abolishing it, but what may be most conducive for that end I cannot determine. Perhaps were no ships sent in for one year before the month of September it might be effectively done. The situation that the debts of this colony lie in at present, from the courts of justice being shut and from the prospect of the non-exportation agreement taking place, points out the ruinous policy of allowing them in future. This will be one remedy against the second evil, for when little or no credit is allowed the planters must part with their produce at a fixed price.

There is a large crop of wheat in the ground. I observe your

instruction to purchase that grain for money when a considerable profit can be made by it. The price of wheat for two years past has been lower at the beginning of the purchase than when it rose. Those who bought it at 4s. at that time last year made a great profit; at the same time they ran the risk of not gaining anything. If a true judgement could be formed of the actual value of the wheat, a purchase for money may sometimes be made early in the year before the exporter comes to market on low terms, but after he has offered a price none can be bought for less. As the Association only prohibits the exportation to Britain, Ireland and the West Indies I think there is no doubt but wheat may be sent to Europe exclusive of Britain and Ireland after the 10th September provided government will tolerate such a trade after the Americans have stopped the other. If they do, some of your ships may be employed therein through the winter. His Majesty's ships on this station are exceedingly alert in searching every vessel that comes within the Capes to prevent an illicit trade.

You have directed the ledgers for last year to be copied and the originals sent home. This cannot be soon done until we get more assistants. I think, as there are many settlements on the ledgers which will be known by the debtors and which we could not readily be distinguish in a copy it should be better to send the copies than the originals. But you have time to consider this and to advise before they can be executed. In the event of the accident you dread happening, would not an authentic list of the debts answer the purpose as well as the ledger?

I am very happy to be informed of the large quantity of tobacco you had on hand for sale, and the high price you expected for it. The declaration of the Virginians to leave off the culture of tobacco joined to the non-exportation scheme, seems to have been a wise measure to revise the value of their staple. However, it may be dangerous to twist the cord too far. I make no doubt you will seize the moment of selling to advantage. You may depend the present exportation will not be a short one; I think now that it will exceed 50,000 hogsheads and the preparation for the ensuing crop is great. The spring is remarkably early; indeed we have had no severe weather this winter. Should our public affairs therefore be settled and trade go on as usual or should our exports at the next Congress

be continued open to a later period, for which there may be an attempt made, I am apprehensive prices in Europe will tumble with great rapidity. At the same time the fate of the ensuing crop is not known. Of late the weather is cold, windy and dry. From some late frosts the peaches have been generally destroyed and I believe some forward tobacco beds thinned. However, the prospect for a crop is hitherto very promising, yet we may have an unfavourable spring and summer. If they are not so the crop will be very forward. I may also here take notice that our inspection here ends next October.

The rate of exchange at Philadelphia cannot be estimated at more than 55 per cent and Willing, Morris and Co. advise that it will continue decreasing until there is a renewal of imports of British goods. Money is exceeding scarce in Virginia. Bills are daily offering at 25 per cent which is the highest rate I expect at the ensuing meeting. Indeed it may be than at 20 per cent, falling lower through the summer unless the present disturbance is settled. Then, but not before, I imagine our Assembly will sit to do any business. They now stand prorogued to the 6th May. Many of the members express themselves against an emission of paper money thinking the rise of exchange and its attendant consequences a disadvantage to the colony which, in its present situation, I will venture to say is not fact. But what other method they will fall upon to defray the expense of the late expedition against the Indians is not known.

Since writing you last I have drawn on you as follows:

On account of Falmouth Store (CA) purchase Feb. 8th in favour of Thomas Hepburn, payable at Glasgow at 60%	£100
March 26th In favour of Andrew Kennies, payable at London	100
March 31st In favour of William Allinson, payable London	120

Which please to honour and place them to the respective accounts.

I have sent 130 hogsheads from Rappahannock to Potomac for the *Cochrane*. We have had much westerly wind since the craft left

this place and it is very uncertain when they may get to Quantico: if they do get round safely and in the usual time the ship will not be detained.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co. per the *Cochrane* & James

Dumfries 8th April 1775

Since writing you the 31st inst., copy of which is undercover, I have purchased from Mr William Carr 100 hogsheads tobacco at 16s. stg. payable in April and June, from Mushett and Lawson 50 hogsheads on the same terms and from William Love, 50 hogsheads, payable in April.

Mr Reid, in his tour through the Northern Neck, engaged from Hudson and Daniel Wise 150 to 200 hogsheads at 15s. stg. to be delivered in six weeks from the 29th inst. and payable by bills on London on delivery. He could not do anything in the Eastern Shore. What tobacco was there for sale have been bought a few days before he got over for Neil Jamieson.<sup>1</sup>

Mr Henderson has purchased on James River about 400 hogsheads from 13s. 6d. to 18s. 6d. sterling, the particulars of which I see he mentions in his letter of the 1st inst., a copy undercover.

The alarm seems to be general all over the colony and I daresay the store price will be 20s. to 25s. At Hanover Court on Thursday the latter price was currently given for tobacco in Page's warehouses. Mr Simpson, it is said for Donald, Scott and Co.,<sup>2</sup> appeared there with a trunk containing about £500 which he exhibited to public view in Fellman's long room and soon got clear of for tobacco at the above price of twenty five shillings.

Under cover are manifests for 100 hogsheads, 991,644 lbs, tobacco purchased from Mr Carr and shipped on board the *Cochrane* which please to apply to my credit on the <CA> account.

<sup>1</sup> Jamieson was chief factor for Glassford, Gordon and Monteath and Co. (styled Neil Jamieson and Co. in Virginia) but also carried on an extensive trade to the West Indies and southern Europe on his own account

<sup>2</sup> A Glasgow tobacco house consisting of James McCall, Robert Scott, James Dennistoun, Sr. and Jr., John Govan, Robert Donald and Thomas Donald. Thomas Simpson was their factor in Hanover Town, Virginia. PRO, T. 79/18, no. 1

I have drawn on you April 15th:

In favour of Charles Mortimer payable in London at	
60% on account Dumfries store	£50
In favour of Duncan Murray and Co. (CA) cargo	£60

These I hope you will duly honour and place to the respective accounts.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co. by the *Ocean*

Petersburg 22nd April 1775

On Monday the 17th inst. I was favoured with yours of the 8th February by the *Annie* express from Mr Hamilton and next day that of the 31st January with Mr Cuninghame's of the 24th and the others mentioned by the *Speirs* came to hand by post.

I observe the Parliament are determined to enforce obedience from the province of Massachusetts Bay to their Acts relative to that province. What may be the consequence is hard to say. I apprehend the other colonies will persevere in supporting them, and the measures they may follow for that purpose are to be dreaded. Since the non-importation and the projected non-exportation scheme has had no effect, the next Congress may not only put an immediate stop to exports but throw off all dependence on Great Britain. One thing I look upon as certain: should Government prohibit any trade but with Great Britain, Ireland and the British West Indies the Congress will immediately stop our sending any produce to these places. This they may do more readily as the exportation of grain will soon be over for the season, and tobacco will in a short time be out of the hands of the planters. Until then a stoppage might create divisions amongst the people and I suppose will be avoided. However, all this is only conjecture; a little time will discover what effect the determination of Parliament will have. I wish Government may not proceed to stop the trade formerly allowed to other ports as, if that is left open, I think the next Congress could not deviate so far from the law laid down by the last as to stop the exports before the 10th September. But be that as it may, it will, as you observe, be prudent how soon our collections and purchases are shipped, and I am glad for that reason that we may depend on three ships from



Whitehaven from 350 to 450 hogsheads burthen each to arrive in May. Although those collections and purchases are much less than you expect yet, if the trade remains open, they will be loaded and as directed without trusting to the return of the *Ocean* and *Venus*. We shall endeavour to take up on charter in the colony what we may want instead of them, depending that you will be regulated in your intention of chartering ships in May from our advices since receipt of orders of the *Houston* which have not been encouraging with regard to our making extensive purchases and I think would prevent your chartering any more than those advised of. If it is otherwise your next letter will inform us.

Before there was any great quantity of tobacco in the merchants' hands for sale every person was alarmed with the rise in Europe and almost every one was on the catch for purchases for money. This of course raised the prices here higher than the situation of the colony relative to the prospect for the ensuing crops would justify (and until receipt of those letters by the *Speirs* and *Annie* whereby there appears a certainty of the exports being stopped for some time and by that means the prices increased in Europe) more than what could be thought adequate to the value. Now there is little or none for sale on James River as you will be fully informed by your letters (by this opportunity) from Messrs Henderson, Horsburgh and Kennan to whom I particularly refer on that head. I only observe that the cash purchase on James River since the beginning of the inspection amounts to 650 hogsheads and on Rappahannock and Potomac to 500. On the former it would appear it cannot be much increased, on the other we may probably add some but the number is very uncertain. And there may be agreeable to what I wrote you the 31st inst. (copy of which is under cover) a purchase made in Maryland of which your proportion cannot be yet ascertained.

Mr Findlay wrote me the 10th inst. that he had agreed with Mr Foster to make a purchase on Patuxent of 600 hogsheads from 18s. to 21s. stg. exclusive of cash and commission. He is to execute it on these terms: the amount to be settled at the current Baltimore Exchange on the day of payment towards the middle of August for which he is to be found money then and to be allowed twenty five guineas each hundred hogsheads. Further, he is to be supplied with £1,000 currency or more as soon as it can be procured that he may

pick up what he can from needy men which he thinks may be done to that extent within the limit. Again, where the people will not take the above terms he is to purchase with bills certain and for what he does in that way he is to be allowed forty guineas a hundred hogsheads. Depending on Mr Foster's opinion that he can make this purchase, Mr Findlay wrote to Mr Cuninghame by the *James* to send out shipping to be in Hampton against the first of August in room of the *Cuninghame* which, it is proposed, should take in those fine tobaccos which I beg leave to confirm to you. Towards prosecuting the purchase and for my half of the sum in currency to be lodged with Mr Foster I drew on you the 15th inst. in Mr Findlay's favour two bills value £250 and £200 stg. the place and time of payment left blank for his filling up on making a sale which when presented please to honour and place to your (CA) cargo.

You thought we were exceeding cautious in supposing the extent of the running store collections. I thought so too. But I now find those collections will fall considerably short of the quantity calculated on as the whole that can be depended on from James River does not exceed 1,700 hogsheads. The Rappahannock and Potomac purchases are backward and it is likely will also fall short. At present, estimating the whole of the store collections to be 4,200 hogsheads and provided the *Cunninghame* is not sent to Maryland, there is a deficiency of 900 hogsheads in the loading of your own ships and the three chartered ones, allowing the *Cochrane*, *Ocean* and *Venus* to make two trips. The former may do it, but I do not expect the other two can. On their arrival, if we cannot or are not allowed to load them, you will please as intended send us full instructions in what manner to dispose of them.

The prospect for another crop of tobacco is as favourable as could be wished but the prices in the country during the summer will I am afraid be exceeding high, at which I cannot even pretend to guess. We shall continue to purchase for money while there is a probability of shipping it but I apprehend, as mentioned above, the quantity will not be large, the sellers depending that the exchange will be very low at the ensuing meeting held which they have got in their hands at a currency price. Indeed I am afraid the exchange may be under 20 per cent, still I think it will be superior to what bills would yield to the northward.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co. by the *Annie*

Falmouth 3rd May 1775

Since writing you the 22nd from Petersburg, copy of which is annexed, I am favoured with your of the 28th February by the *Bill*. This came to hand on the evening of the 28th. At the same time I received those of the *Venus*, Capt. Wilson, who forwarded them from Hobbs Hole the day before by post as he could not procure an express.

I am sorry the motion made by Lord North had the effect of making the Trade of Glasgow sell so large a quantity of tobacco as 7,000 hogsheads at the price mentioned. This motion seems to have been intended to deceive as we have advice by a vessel to Philadelphia from Bristol, which she left the 20th March, that a bill had passed both Houses of Parliament shutting up all our ports except Quebec, New York and North Carolina.<sup>1</sup> This is not due to his lordship's motion and would lead to a belief that the motion was made through despondency, but on receiving advice of the agitations in New York the ministry resumed fresh courage and became more determined to enforce their measures relative to America. From what I can learn of the nation and from what judgement I can form, I think the proposal would not have been agreeable to the Americans, consequently that the law of Congress relative to exports would have been pursued. The bill mentioned above will I am persuaded of itself, supposing it restrains our Commerce to Great Britain, Ireland and the British Islands, induce the Congress at their meeting the 10th of this month to put an immediate stop to exports to those places. But when this is joined to the convulsed state we are now in I look upon such a stoppage as certain to take place.

As the duty I owe to you makes it necessary that I should enter more fully into public transactions than I could wish, I shall at times give you by way of journal an account of such of these transactions as I judge will have an effect on trade but observe as I must quote from gazettes and other papers of intelligence I will not be answerable for the truth of what I may write.

The 21st April between 3 and 4 o'clock in the morning all the

<sup>1</sup> 15 Geo. III, c. 18

gunpowder in the magazine at Williamsburg was carried off and lodged on board the armed schooner *Magdalen* lying at Burhmills ferry on James River by order of the Governor. This proving disagreeable to the Corporation of the City of Williamsburg they remonstrated and required of his excellency for what particular purpose it was done, entreating him at the same time to order the powder to be returned. To which he answered, as he did not think it secure in the magazine he had moved it to a place where it was perfectly so but on an insurrection (which was dreaded) it should be delivered in half an hour. This manoeuvre of the Governor's seems to have given general disgust; when the advice thereof reached Fredericksburg on Tuesday the 25th it threw the town into a ferment. Some of the members of the independent company thought it necessary that an immediate restitution should be procured. For what purpose they sent invitations to the companies in the neighbouring counties to join them at Fredericksburg on Friday the 28th. Accordingly about 500 men from Prince William, Loudon, Fauquier, Culpepper and Orange, fully armed and accoutered, assembled there on that and the next day. Meanwhile three of the Spotsylvania Company were dispatched to Williamsburg to learn whether the powder was replaced in the magazine. They returned on Friday evening. Next day a council was held on the expediency of marching to Williamsburg, the majority of which were of the opinion that it was not, but thought it necessary to remain at Fredericksburg until they heard further from the Hon. the Speaker who was on his way by land to attend the General Congress. Accordingly a messenger was dispatched to Colonel Pendleton in California, where he then was, who returned with his answer on Sunday night. Next morning the Council met when it was finally determined to disperse and to publish their motives for assembling.

During the time this body was in Fredericksburg the expresses arrived from the northward on Friday, Sunday and Monday giving an account of an engagement 'twixt the King's troops and the Provincials. It is said that a detachment from the former was sent from Boston the 21st April (the same day the affray happened at Williamsburg) with an intention, as supposed, to destroy a magazine at Concord. But on their firing at a company of militia the

country was alarmed and numbers assembled which caused a reinforcement to be sent from Boston. A battle ensued. The particulars are not known but the regulars were drove or retreated to Charlestown. The number killed on both sides are said to be considerable. This is the beginning of a civil war; God knows when or how it will end. At present I think it must have an effect to cause an immediate stoppage of our trade. Richard Henry Lee,<sup>1</sup> after hearing those advices when in Fredericksburg declared publicly as his opinion that the first thing the Congress do on their meeting would be to stop our exports. I do not indeed expect the ports will be continued longer open than the first of June. As this is the case we are impatiently expecting the arrival of the chartered ships as well as endeavouring to charter here in case they do not arrive in time. But in this we shall not, I am afraid, be successful which will be very unfortunate as there is a good deal of purchased tobacco on hand. Meanwhile, until the determination of the Congress is known we have suspended buying any.

I drew on you the first inst. of Andrew Shepherd, payable in London at 60 per cent for £100 which please to honour and place to your <CA> cargo.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co. by the *Venus*

Falmouth 13th May 1775

Since writing you the 3rd inst. by the *Annie*, Capt. Pollock, I am favoured with Mr Cuninghame's letters of the 3rd, 14th and 16th March, with your of the 18th of that month by the *Friendship*, *Falmouth* and *Boyd*.

It gives me much pain that you should be so exceedingly displeased at my conduct for not making extensive purchases of tobacco on receipt of orders by the *Houston* when I am conscious I did all that was in my power to do but it may be necessary to take a retrospective view of our situation at that time and the construction we put upon the order.

Ever since the fatal year of 1772, we have been cramped in any operations for money, and your limit for purchasing has been

<sup>1</sup> Richard Henry Lee (1732-1794), member of the Continental Congress, 1775-9, and a leading radical politician in Virginia

confined. This no doubt took its rise from the low ebb the markets were at in Europe, where the prices in the common course of things were not expected to rise without two short exportations from this place, at least that such was your opinion last summer which appears from your letter of the 20th July wherein you observe tobacco would not bear any considerable advance prior to 1776 and then only if the exportation of 1774 did not exceed 50,000 hogsheads and the present one 40,000. In that case you say a scarcity would be felt in Europe, but add if the crop then on the ground should exceed 40,000 hogsheads no good can be expected of the trade. In conformity to this opinion we were then limited to 9s. 6d. on Rappahannock, Potomac and lower James River, on Appomatox to 10s. 9d. and upper James River to 12s. stg. not to be exceeded unless the crop on the ground should be shortened. We were obliged to give more in filling up the *Ocean*, but as the exportation amounted to 62,112 hogsheads and in the general estimation a full crop of 50,000 hogsheads was housed we could not (allowing there had been tobacco for sale which was not the case) have made any extra cash purchase. Under those limits and in this situation we were on receipt of the letters of the *Houston* the 29th September.

From our collections for last year turning out so short we desired to pick up at the different settlements what we could for money as it was probable prices would rise in Europe and America, and authorised to go the length of *cg/currency* for Rappahannock and other mean tobacco, for Appomatox, *ch/m* and for upper James River, *cmf*, or something more at each of the last for good crops. The order of the 28th October is couched in the following terms: 'I require you to purchase a quantity through the winter and spring, before it rises with you as you may depend it will be up'. This order is said to be without any limit, but as it was subjoined to the letter of the 29th September and received at the same time, the construction we put on it was that the prices mentioned could not with safety be exceeded in our then situation respecting last exportation and the supposed quantity of the current one.

At that time it was doubtful here whither the non-exportation scheme would have any effect on the markets in Europe, as it was generally thought, allowing it to take place the 10th September,

that it could not continue long. When these things are coolly considered and throwing on one side the disappointment of there being no purchase made, I think it is a fair inference that the order by the *Houston* could not justify our purchasing any more than what was thought sufficient for the dispatch of your own shipping at higher prices than these cited the 29th September. Be that as it may with regard to myself it will appear from my letter of the 8th January that although my opinion was against making any extensive cash purchase in the disordered state of the colonies yet, on receipt of the order, application was instantly made to the sellers in Fredericksburg, Falmouth and Dumfries who, for the reasons I there and afterwards assign, either had none to sell or declined to sell until they knew the market price. Mr Reid met with the same success in a tour he then took through the merchants in the lower parts of the Northern Neck. This is truth, and although we were unsuccessful it cannot be said that we paid no regard to orders. You will also find on referring the letter of the 8th January that on Mr Henderson advising he could not buy any tobacco at what you thought saving prices, I gave it as my opinion that he should purchase the deficiency of the collection in the plan of shipping on the best terms in his power. Why this was not done, after observing in general that there was little in the merchants' hands in December, I beg leave to refer you to Mr Henderson and my advice since that time.

There is another heavy change that behoves to obviate; that is allowing Mr Kiddell and others of the concern of Glassford and Henderson to run away with the store purchase at a certain price higher than fourteen shillings. You will please to remember that during last summer you earnestly desired prices might be kept down through this purchase and that in your letter prior to those per the *Houston* you expected it would commence at 19s. 6d. Nay, you had declared if there was a full crop made, ten shillings was too much, and this I am sorry to say was too evident from the low price offered by the French agents and their steadiness at that offer. It was therefore surely my duty (before there was any hope of a considerable rise in Europe) to endeavour to have the price in the store fixed on saving terms. Fourteen shillings in the usual way of carrying on the purchase was generally at that time the beginning of December thought sufficient and, although it was foreseen in the event of a

non-exportation agreement taking place and a short crop on the ground that the price might rise in the summer, every purchaser here and at Fredericksburg were of opinion that it was in vain to attempt buying tobacco from the planters at any price without engaging the market. Being therefore without law to compel them to pay their debts, it was thought most prudent to take the tobacco at the general market price. And, as we could have no expectation of any new store being fixed to depend on the purchase at a saving price, consequently the lower we fixed it in the fall the greater reason had we to expect success, as whatever price is nominally allowed in the stores is for the most part huffed at. A rise from 14s. to 16s. 8d., would have given as much content in the spring as one to 20s. from 16s. 8d. Of course, had our plan been pursued the purchase would have been easy and probably made a hundred less.

I am persuaded it will be needy to spend time in asserting what is well known to you that the planters this way will at no period of the purchase before the end of the inspection part with their crop at any certain price. On a full crop being on the ground and a falling market at home, we would have been fortunate to carry through the purchase at the price we began with and even to have reduced it. But in a contrary situation when a rise took place at any time in the inspection we were obliged in a general way to allow that rise for all we had taken prior thereto. An instance of this kind was apparent in the year 1772. We allowed eighteen shillings certain to the middle of May, as at that time Mr Robb from the price given in Hanover stated it here to twenty shillings, at which date every purchaser, notwithstanding he did not engage the rise, was obliged to settle all his tobacco. From what I have said I think it is apparent that Mr Kiddell could not run away with the purchase by allowing a certain price from 15s. to 16s. 8d. at which you say Messrs Glassford and Henderson declare they have got the *Jeanie's* load. I have been told Mr Montgomerie shipped 100 hogsheads on board that ship but of this I am not certain or is it material. It remains to be seen whether Mr Kiddell will not allow his customers the general market price; if he does not, I am apt to think they will leave him at first opportunity. If so the mode he embraced will only, and that too from unsuspected circumstance, be attended with immediate benefit.

On the whole gentlemen, I should with you be exceeding sorry



were there a certainty of it being exported, that an extensive cash purchase was not made at the low prices in December. But I think from the above circumstances, I cannot be blamed for it not being done. I wish most sincerely that you have no cause to repent of our having made even the small purchase we did after receipt of letters of the *Cochrane* and *Ocean* from an immediate stop being put to the exports by the Congress. I most devoutly pray that they may not, but if they should, it will confirm my opinion, of the impropriety of making extensive cash purchases before matters were settled betwixt Britain and the colonies.

I am glad to observe that the markets in Europe were recovering from the shock of Lord North's motion. It would be happy were we in such a state here as to avail ourselves of this intelligence. Enclosed you have copy of what I wrote you the 3rd inst. by the *Annie*, Capt. Pollock, whereby you will see the convulsion we are now in. I there advised that we had suspended our purchases, until it was known whether the Congress would on their meeting shut the ports. This was then thought a prudent measure but on ships coming in which are the annual Liverpool ones, the merchants seem to have got over the panic, and the store purchase is again going on. At the same time as I find Mr McCall and Mr Wilson want to buy from the merchants, I have been induced to take some (about 50 hogsheads) that I had engaged the preference at 16s. stg. But declining for a few days to buy has had one good effect, that is, of hurrying the planters to the warehouse and making them anxious to part with their tobacco, at the now current price of twenty shillings. But nothing more shows the disagreeable and uncertain situation we are in than what we are now obliged to do: to lie by undoubtedly would be the most prudent conduct, but we might lose the purchase; on the other hand we may buy a quantity of tobacco which we cannot ship. A purchase made at 16s. stg., provided liberty of exportation is continued, would be an advantageous one; but if the ports are shut and it remains in the country it would be otherwise. In the one case the purchasers' fame would be raised high; in the other it would be as much abased and probably without sufficient reason in either, for it is a common remark, but as true as it is common, that success too often stamps the character of a man in the public estimation.

Immediately on receiving account of the restraining bills being brought into Parliament and of the hostilities to the northward, but now particularly on seeing the disturbance on this colony, on the Governor removing the powder from the magazine, we have been on the outlook to charter ships in the country. Mr Henderson, in consequence of what I wrote him by express on that head, has made a conditional agreement with Mr Coutts for his ship the *Loyal Exchange*, burthen 500 hogsheads at £7 per tun for freight and to be loaded in 40 days, one fourth of the amount of the freight to be paid on the delivery, one fourth 60 days thereafter, and the remaining one half at six months. He had it in his option to accept the ship on these terms, provided he liked it on viewing her, for which he is gone to Norfolk where she is lying. This condition was also intended in the event of those chartered ships arriving when he was away as they, with the *Cunninghame*, will be fully sufficient to carry off what tobacco we have now on hand.

I have written letters to Hampton instructing the captains of the vessels from Whitehaven to proceed in this manner: the first, which leaves to City Point, James River, the second to Hobbs Hole on Rappahannock and the other to lie at Hampton for orders by return of the express.

I long much for them and the *Cunninghame's* arrival. If we are allowed to ship tobacco and can find craft I hope they will not be detained. Immediately on hearing of the restraining bill, Mr Findlay put a stop to purchasing in Maryland. I cannot therefore say what may be now done in that province; I am afraid not much, as should the port remain open the price will probably be too high as they have great expectations on Patuxent.

Neither can I say anything farther than I have done already with regard to returning your later ships. In this state of suspense it is more chance with regard to any plan of proceeding; you will therefore act as you judge best. If it is not absolutely certain that they can be here before the 10th September I think they had better be employed somewhere else, until a free exportation again takes place. Whether this may continue to then is very doubtful.

We have not yet got a circumstantial account of the engagement at Boston. Under cover you have copy of the last by which it

appears General Gage<sup>1</sup> was besieged in Boston by 20,000 men, that the inhabitants were leaving the town, and that an attack upon the fortifications was expected.

The Independent Company of Hanover being equally disgusted with those our way at the Governor's removing the powder from the magazine, a number of men from that and the neighbouring counties, with Patrick Henry, one of the delegates to the General Congress, at their head, marched towards Williamsburg to procure restitution thereof or the value. When they had got as far as Duncastle the Receiver General awarded them, on being applied to, a bill of £320 or £330 with which they returned perfectly satisfied. The Governor has issued, with advice of the council, two proclamations against these proceedings asserting that it undeniably appears that there is no longer the least security for the life or property of any man. Wherefore he strictly charges all persons on their allegiance, not to aid, abet or give countenance to the said Patrick Henry or any other concerned in such combinations, and warns them of the danger of so doing.

On the 12th inst. I drew on you sundry bills viz.

In favour of Mushett and Lawson payable in London at 60%	£200
„ William Love „ „ „	130
„ „ „ „ „	234
„ „ „ Glasgow „	140
	<hr/>
	£704

Which please to honour and place to the <CA> account being imports of tobacco purchases from them.

I observe you have had much wet weather during the winter and spring in Britain; it has been remarkably dry here and the spring has been rather too cold and windy. Indeed of late there has been some fine rains, and the general appearance of the weather would induce a belief that tobacco plants are plenty, but I am told it is otherwise, as from several frosts about the time they were coming up and from a fly destroying them the first sown beds are very thin. However, as others have been since sowed, it cannot yet be said that

<sup>1</sup> General Thomas Gage (1721-1787), British commander-in-chief in North America from 1763

there will not be a sufficiency for planting the crop, some of which is already in the hills.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co. by the *Boyd*

Falmouth 29th May 1775

Annexed you have a copy of what I wrote you the 13th and 15th instant by the *Venus*. Since then I am favoured with your of the 27th March by the *Richmond*. I am very sorry that at the date of this letter you continued of opinion that my conduct regarding the present purchase was not only ridiculous but unpardonable.

At this time I am unwilling to add to what I have written on that head under date the 13th as I expect it may be satisfactory.

I observe the application of the French agents for tobacco and that the trade had declined accepting their offer. I wrote you in my last that the merchants here were getting over the dread of an immediate stoppage of exports by the Congress as on reflection it was thought they would not deviate from their former determination, especially when proposals were to be made by Government for reconciling the difference. Which opinion I have the pleasure to advise you is in part confirmed by Mr Findlay who writes me that although on leaving Philadelphia the 19th inst. no determination of the Congress had transpired, measures being as little known there as anywhere on the continent, yet, from all he could gather from different hands he thinks it may be safely concluded that there will be no stoppage of tobacco exports till the 21st July at soonest (the time when it is said the restraining bill takes place) and perhaps this freedom of exportation for *tobacco alone* may be extended to the 10th September, the period fixed by last Congress. That they will be open to the 21st July he adds there may be a dependence. By this advice, until we hear farther, we shall regulate ourselves in purchasing, agreeable to your orders. There is none in the hands of the merchants for sale this way; they are generally shipping their collections expecting great prices in Europe, and on James River the holders will not sell until the meeting of merchants, which will be now in a few days. Meanwhile Mr Henderson is then promised the refusal of sundry parcels.

I believe the three chartered ships, the *Cuninghame* and *Neptune*

will carry off all the cash purchase now on hand, and what may be collected in the stores till the 1st of July. I wish how soon they would make their appearance; the *Cuninghame* in particular I think should have been here before now. Mr Henderson did not take Mr Coutts's ship, but was on terms when I heard from him last for one belonging to the Hamiltons of Nansimond; but whether he gets her or not was uncertain. On those points, I shall write you more fully from Williamsburg.

Since my last the weather has been exceeding seasonable; a good deal of tobacco is planted but as plants are scarce I am inclined to think whatever weather we may have the ensuing will not be a good crop.

The store price continued here at twenty shillings which I hope will be carried through. Notwithstanding I am informed Mr Kiddell has purchased one crop at a pistole, and offered twenty two shillings and sixpence for another. For this it is probable he will be commended! I believe Messrs Glassford and Henderson sent out very full cargoes of goods last fall. By that means their factors have now the advantage over others.

I have directed inventories of the goods on hand at your sundry settlements to be taken the first of June. They will be immediately forwarded so that in the event of your shipping goods on peace being restored they may serve in place of schemes. Since the determination of the Congress relative to imports, your factors were instructed to give as little credit as was consistent with prudence and your interest with respect to the debts already owing. They will inform you the particulars of the sales. At Williamsburg I must draw on you for £3,000 for the (CA) purchase, £700 for Falmouth store and £300 for Dumfries store.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co. by the *Nelly*, Capt. McClarty

Williamsburg 5th June 1775

The foregoing is a copy of what I wrote you the 29th by the *Boyd*. In coming here on Saturday Mr Henderson showed me your letter to him of the 4th April by the *Donald*. The *Cuninghame* is still out as well as the *Neptune* and the three chartered ships will meet with dispatch on arrival. Two of the chartered ones with the

*Neptune* will be loaded on James River, the other I am now inclined to order to Potomac that the whole of the tobacco now on hand may be carried off before the restraining bills take place, in case the Congress should at that period put a stop to our exports to Britain, with regard to which we are still in the dark.

In the Governor's speech to the General Assembly the first of this month (which will be sent you by this opportunity) it is generally thought there is an opening left for negotiation, towards settling the unhappy dispute 'twixt Britain and the Colonies. After considerable debate on Friday and Saturday, I'm told the House of Burgesses agreed to address his Lordship in return, and a committee was appointed accordingly. Unluckily, while they were sitting on this business, at 12 o'clock Saturday night they were informed that three men of the Williamsburg Volunteer Company were wounded by the shooting of a spring gun on their attempting to get into the magazine which has irritated many people. And, as it is thought such guns were placed there by order of the Governor it is to be feared this accident will be the cause of much disturbance. The address is to be considered this day by a committee of the whole house, when some judgement may be formed of the effect the resolution of Parliament of the 27th February will have.

There is also a great complaint to the southward for want of plants, but as the weather is and has been for some time exceeding favourable, there may be a sufficiency for planting a full crop.

Since writing you last I have drawn on you:

June 2nd	In favour of George Dobbie payable in London @ 60%	£113
3rd	„ James Wilson „ „	132 3s. 6d.
	„ „ „ „	140
	„ „ „ „	225 14s. 7d.
		<hr/>
		£610 17s. 1d.

Which please to honour and place to the account of the (CA) cargo.

There are few merchants yet in town and I hear of very little business being done. Mr Wilson of London has purchased about 100 hogsheads of lower York and Rappahannock tobacco from James Wilson and Company at twenty two shillings and sixpence currency to be paid this meeting.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co. by the *Richmond*

Williamsburg 9th June 1775

The *Cuninghame* arrived at Urbanna the 3rd inst. By an opportunity to Williamsburg Capt. Henry advised me of his arrival and (notwithstanding he knew I was at Williamsburg) that he would forward your letters to Falmouth by express agreeable to orders. But on his reaching Hobbs Hole, understanding I had desired them to be forwarded here in case of his arrival while the merchants were in town, he sent them by Mr Gilchrist who was on his way down and they came to hand on Tuesday. I cannot enter fully into a reply at present.

On Monday the House of Burgesses approved of the address to the Governor formed by their committee, wherein amongst other things they explain the reason of the stoppage of the Courts of Justice, and declare their intention to consider maturely of the proposition of parliament. After which they made an order to take that part of the speech relative thereto into consideration next day and appointed a committee to enquire into the state of the public magazine. Meanwhile a number of people said to be from the neighbouring counties, broke open the magazine and were carrying off the arms until some of the members of the House of Burgesses stopped them. That afternoon the committee appointed by the House made a requisition in writing for the keys of the magazine from the Governor that they might execute their commission. He declined to deliver them for the present. Next morning he informed the House by a written message that he had been waited upon by some people calling themselves a committee of that House, who had left with him a paper without date or signature desiring the keys of the magazine and desiring to know if this was by their order. Immediately on the back of this message, another was delivered setting forth: that he moved the powder from the magazine from the best motives; that considering a recent instance of his venturing his life for the country, he thought the best construction would have been put thereon; but finding it had given great uneasiness to the people, and trusting that the Burgesses are now met to remove every grievance, and by their wisdom to establish the public tranquility, he promises that as soon as he sees the magazine in a

proper state to secure the powder that he will replace it. To the first message the House confirmed the commission given to the committee to enquire into the state of the magazine and informed his Lordship that they had applied to him in consequence of that appointment. To the other they express their sense of his services in the Indian expedition, acquainting him that they had begun an enquiry into the disquietude of the people and the consequent disturbances. Thus the affair of the magazine was in a fair way of being finally settled to the satisfaction of every person, as the Governor sent the keys thereof to the House.

Wednesday was spent in considering that part of his Lordship's speech relative to the proposed plan of reconciliation; and in receiving the report of a committee on the Acts of Assembly which had or would soon expire. In the former they made some progress in a committee of the whole House who required further time. Meanwhile, I think they will not determine anything conclusive and after mentioning their sentiments on the plan and some circumstances applicable to Virginia state that it will be referred to the General Congress. Amongst the acts reported to be expired or near expired are the fee bill and inspection law which are not revived or continued at present but are to lie on the table that they may be again taken up this session in the event of our public affairs being settled.

On the meeting of the House yesterday the council sent them a message from the Governor that, as from undoubted intelligence, he thought his life, family and property in great danger he had removed himself and family on board the *Fowey* man of war (lying opposite to Yorktown) but he had no intention that this measure should interrupt the business on which they were assembled; that the access to him should be easy and safe and that he would cheerfully do what he could to the furthering thereof. This withdrawal of the Governor threw the House into a delicate situation, as they cannot properly transact the business of the session with him at that distance. The message was instantly referred to a committee of the whole house, who came to the resolution of addressing him on the occasion expressing their concern that his Lordship's apprehension for the safety of himself and family should have caused his and their retiring from the palace; declaring their abhorrence of any combination to injure his person, family or



property; that as they do not believe such a thought could enter into the mind of a Virginian, they think the information is ill founded, and must have been given to his Lordship by some evil minded person. They assure him that he and his family will be perfectly safe at the palace; that they are ready to join in any measure he may think proper for his safety, and finally they pray that he and they would return to Williamsburg. On this address being communicated to the council, they approved and joined therein and it will be delivered today by a deputation from both Houses. What may be the private motives for this extraordinary measure of his Lordship's I know not; the ostensible ones are said to be that an inhabitant of Williamsburg of property and character had informed him that a combination was entered into by sundry people to destroy his property at a place near this city and to take possession of his family.

Since my last I have drawn on you sundry bills June 6th in favour of Hudson River payable in London at 60 per cent:

I set value	£150
I „ „	138
I „ „	100
I „ „	120
I „ „	112
I „ „	90
	<u>£710</u>

9th June John and George Fowler payable same time and place

I set value	£150
I „ „	52 9s. 5d.
	<u>£202 9s. 5d.</u>

„ William Carr payable at Glasgow	£729 6s. 1d.
„ Mushett & Lawson „ London	298 3s. 8d.

	<u>£1,939 19s. 2d.</u>
„ Henry Patty „ „	159 1s. 6d.
„ John Hopkins „ „	17 16s. 5d.

£2,116 17s. 1d.

Which please to honour and place to your <CA> cargo.

There is as yet no business done in the exchange way for money; that article appears scarce and I am afraid it will be with difficulty if we obtain 20 per cent. Lower tobacco is held up at 20s. stg. or 22s. 6d. current money.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co. by the *Richmond*

Williamsburg 12th June 1775

Since writing you by this ship the Governor's message to the House of Burgesses on his withdrawing from the palace, their addresses thereon from the palace, their addresses thereon and his answer, have been published; of which you have copies under cover. On receiving this answer on Saturday the House of Burgesses appointed a committee to enquire into the disorders therein alluded to, and it is to be taken into consideration this day.

The merchants are chiefly come to town: but everybodys' attention seems to be so taken up by the gloomy prospect of our public affairs that there is as yet little said about exchange.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co. by the *Cuninghame*

Williamsburg 23rd June 1775

Yesterday morning the *Wilham*, John Johnstone, and the *Brayton*, James Harrison, two of the chartered ships from Whitehaven, arrived at Burwell's Office, being ordered up James River by a general letter lodged at Hampton. The *Brayton* loads at Hoods and the *Wilham* at City Point. They will meet with dispatch. I have also pleasure to advise you that Capt. Morris of the *Neptune* came here this morning: this ship is to moor at Virina and will be loaded with upper tobacco. By Capt. Morris and by Capt. Robison of the *Ithoma* who arrived two or three days before the *Neptune*, I am followed with your letter of the 20th and 25th April the contents of which I observe, and shall answer more particularly as soon as I reach home.

Never was the scarcity of money so much felt as at the present meeting. The exchange was broke on Saturday last at 15 per cent by Mr Thos. Montgomerie, at which money cannot be procured for the bills at market. Having discovered this uncommon scarcity some days before the exchange was broke, on the 15th I sent sundry

bills, value £1,000 stg. by Mr Findlay to Philadelphia at various sums as mentioned in the annexed list of bills drawn since my last, consigned to and in favour of Messrs Willing and Morris who are instructed to sell them at the best exchange current on receipt. They are all drawn on the <CA> account, but I intend them to answer generally our demands on Rappahannock and Potomac. After the exchange was broke other people sent bills to the same place by express, particularly Mr Sam Inglis, Neil Jamieson, R. Burton for Speirs and Company and John Skelton who you know to be a tobacco purchaser at Richmond. This money is expected in eight or ten days from this time and of it I have accepted from Mr Inglis (so great is the scarcity here) £1,000 currency, of which £525 is in part of a debt due to Fredericksburg and Falmouth stores by Archibald McCall and Company<sup>1</sup> for wheat, and the remainder for bills of exchange at 15 per cent. As a further proof of the scarcity of money, dollars have been current in all contracts at 6 shillings.

You will observe that I have drawn on you considerably more on the <CA> account than I expected the 29th inst. which proceeds as well from the following purchases of tobacco, as from the bills mentioned above being sent to the northward, having bought from:

John & George Fowler	21	hogsheads on Rappahannock at 18s. bills
John Hopkins	18	" " "
James Willis and Co.	23	" " "
" "	17	" " "
Duncanson, Murray & Co.	11	" " "
Simon Fraser	22	" " "
	<hr/>	
	Total	112
William Ronald		110
		<hr/>
		222
		on Eastern Shore at 18s. 6d.

In payment of Mr Ronald's parcel I have advanced him £500 the remainder to be paid the last of July; for the others I have been obliged to pass ready bills. I make no doubt of your thinking these terms very high for such tobacco, but they are more reasonable than what is given for Nansimond, of which early in the court Mr Inglis bought from 170 to 200 hogsheads at 19s. 6d. stg. To prevent him

<sup>1</sup> Glasgow merchant house in Virginia, consisting of Archibald McCall, William Sheddon, Samuel Inglis and Peter Long. PRO, A.O. 12/136, ff.1-28

from picking up the other mean tobacco here for sale has been partly my motive for taking the above; it has also in a like manner been the cause of Mr Henderson purchasing a quantity of lower James River from 19s. 6d. to 20s. But it has not been the sole cause, as I hope from your accounts, and the prospect of our public affairs, that there will be money made by the purchasers if they can be shipped, even at the high prices allowed.

To secure the shipping of part I have entered into an agreement with Mr Robert Sheddon for the charter of the brigantine, *Helena*, burthen about 350 hogsheads expected every day from Lisbon. If she arrives by the 10th of next month I am to take her on those terms: to pay per tun freight, and to put the tobacco alongside at Portsmouth, they paying the port charges and the cost of stowing the tobacco in the event of its being sent there before the ship arrives. This will be set about immediately as, if she does not come in time, another vessel can be sooner procured at Norfolk than any other place in this colony.

Since writing you last, many messages have passed 'twixt the House of Burgesses, the Council and the Governor relative to the arms in the palace and his withdrawal therefrom. He seems to be fixed in the resolution of not returning to Williamsburg and it remains a doubt whether any of the bills framed this session will be passed into law. I enclose the House of Burgesses's address relative to the resolution of Parliament, the 27th February, from which I think it may be inferred that a reconciliation is at a considerable distance.

I have ordered the *Mayflower* to Hobbs Hole where I propose that she shall lie for the remainder of our Rappahannock collections, reserving our tobacco on Potomac for the *Cochrane's* return.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co. by the *Cuninghame*

Hobbs Hole 25th June 1775

On coming here this morning I found Capt. Henry waiting for me, the *Cuninghame* having come down to the office yesterday. Mr Reid enclosed your manifests for the tobacco on board, bill of loading, the Captain's bill and account of craft here. I shall forward thereafter, not having time to make it at present, the cost of the

List of Bills referred to in the foregoing letter on account of Dumfries, Fredericksburg and Falmouth stores

				Dumfries £	Fredericksburg £	Falmouth £
June 14th	In favour of David Blair	payable in London at 60%		60		
15th	Willing, Morris & Co.	left blank		250		
"	"	"		100		
"	"	"		200		
"	"	"		300		
"	"	"		150		
16th	James Willis & Co.	London at 60%		80		
"	"	"		137 7s. 6d.		
18th	"	"		53 9s. 6d.		
"	"	"		49 9s. 6d.		
"	"	"		63		
19th	Thomas Hodge	"		200		
"	Duncanson & Murray & Co.	"		100		
"	Thomas Reid	"		35		
"	Andrew Buchanan	"	Glasgow	100		
20th	John Mitchell	"	"	50		
"	Simon Fraser	"	"		250	
20 & 21st	Thomas Hepburn 50, 100 & 50 £	London				200
21st	James Somerville	Glasgow				62 18s. 5d.
22nd	William Ronald 100, 230, 170 £	London				
"	Lachlan Campbell	Glasgow				
"	George Muir	"		100		
"	Robert Sheddon & Co.	"		150		
23rd	James Somerville	"			100	
"	Gibson, Donaldson & Hamilton	London			200	
				<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
				£2,278 6s. 6d.	£400	£550
						£462 18s. 5d.

108 hogsheads <CA> tobacco on board. Meanwhile please to give that account credit for the quantity, the account of Capt. Henry's bill, and craft here.

Since my last I have drawn on you as follows:

June 24th In favour of Simon Fraser payable in Glasgow		
@ 60%	£202 16s. 6d.	
June 24th In favour of Samuel Inglis payable in Glasgow		
@ 60%		200
June 25th In favour of Charles Mortimer payable in London		
@ 60%	100	
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	£302 16s. 6d.	200

Under cover is Mr Findlay's exchange of the 14th inst. in my favour on Mr Cuninghame for £5,450 stg. in lieu of the bills sent to Philadelphia in April, and to be applied to the credit of the <CA> account. As Mr Bogle takes his passage in this ship, the *Cuninghame*, you have also enclosed his bill of this date on Robert Bogle Esq.<sup>1</sup> for £138 stg. which you will be please to enter in the same manner.

I beg leave to refer you to Mr Bogle for occurrences here.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co. by the *Jeanie*, Capt. McGill

Falmouth 7th July 1775

On the 29th inst. the *Cochrane* arrived at Quantico after a passage of five weeks and 3 days by her, the *Jeanie*, *Brilliant* and *Blandford*. I am favoured with your letters of the 11th and 12th May. I have already acknowledged the receipt of those of the 6th, 17th, 20th and 25th April to which you refer. I have also the pleasure to acquaint you that the *Mayflower*, Capt. James Crosbie, got to Hobbs Hole the 30th and the *Helena* (the brig I advised you of chartering in my last) to Portsmouth the 27th so that you have no less than six ships in the country.

I have not received either of the charter parties for those ships from Whitehaven. I observe from your letter of the 6th April the terms on which they are chartered; they shall be complied with on our part, and I hope they will be dispatched long before the expiration of their lie days should they not be prevented by a stop being put to our exports before the tobacco can be sent along side, which

<sup>1</sup> Robert Bogle of Shettleston, a leading partner in William Cuninghame and Co.

I do not expect will be the case. At the same time I think proper to mention that those to Great Britain will cease the 10th September, I think does not admit of a doubt. In this colony the Assembly are unanimous in supporting the measures of the Congress and in their opposition to taxes laid by Parliament or to any revenue that body dictates the quantity.

You will have heard before this reaches you that the last session of Assembly adjourned itself until the 24th to the 12th October next without there being one bill passed into a law, which was occasioned by the Governor's declaring that he could not meet the House at the capital and there declining to attend him at his then residence on board the *Fowey*, man of war. Before the house adjourned they entered into several resolves which you will see in the *Gazette* and there is a Convention summoned to meet at Richmond the 17th instant. Meantime the inhabitants of Williamsburg, being alarmed with the report of troops being destined for this colony, have invited to their assistance part of the independent companies from the middle counties, who are now about marching to that place, and will form a body of 250 men exclusive of the city company, which is judged sufficient for the present. This measure it is expected will be approved of by the Convention. Some think they will embody a sufficient force to answer any contingency. We are also informed that the Congress have appointed generals for the American Army at Boston. Col. George Washington, one of the delegates from Virginia, has accepted the chief command. To support this army and the war which is now inevitable they have directed 2 million paper dollars to be issued. The assistance in men hitherto asked from Virginia is two companies of 68 men, each with rifle guns. They are raised in Frederick and Berkley counties; Maryland furnishes two more and Pennsylvania six; the pay is 6 dollars and two thirds of a dollar per month.

From these preparations of the General Congress I think it may be inferred that although they have not published any opinion on the reconciliatory motion which passed in the House of Commons the 27th February they are determined to support the claim of rights made at their last meeting with force. This induces me to conclude that if exports to Britain are permitted to the 10th September, they will undoubtedly cease on that day. How long this

stoppage of all commercial intercourse may continue is very uncertain; at present it would seem to depend on the operations of the war. In New England General Gage has published a proclamation exhorting the inhabitants to lay down their arms; offering a pardon to everyone that does so, except Samuel Adams and John Hancock, proclaiming them and their associates, with those who continue in or take up arms after that date against the King's Government, to be rebels; promising protection to all who manifest their allegiance to the King and affection to the parent state; and declaring in the present disuse of all others the law martial to be established throughout the province. This proclamation is deemed infamous.

By last post we are also informed of another engagement at Bunker Hill near to Boston, but the accounts of this like these of the last are various and uncertain. It seems a number of provincials on Friday the 16th went to Bunker Hill in order to entrench, which they continued to do until next day in the forenoon when they were attacked by a body of regulars who had landed from Boston at Charlestown which it is said they plundered and set on fire, one division of the body marching under cover of the smoke to the attack. The action terminated with the provincials being obliged to retreat to Winters Hill. There the engagement was renewed, and the regulars were obliged to retire in turn.

In this view of matters, I look upon it as certain that the price of tobacco will still rise. If so, the sales lately made by you had better been postponed, although you undoubtedly at the time acted right. I expect no other sale would be made until you heard of the commencement of the war in New England and the commotion in this colony, which I presume would have a great effect on the prices, and I am not sorry the French agents had refused to give you  $3\frac{1}{2}$ d, the price lately given in London for the *Cochrane's* cargo, as I hope you will procure more.

It will ease my mind of a great deal of concern which I have been under since the first of May when the ships now loading leave the country. Had the ports been shut with the whole of their loads remaining here, it must have thrown you into a disagreeable situation as well as have been attended with a very great loss. After they are loaded and gone we shall still have a quantity of the <c>



purchase with what may be collected in the stores from this time to the end of the inspection. The back purchase in Virginia has not been so large as you expected, the cause thereof I have already mentioned. The intended purchase in Maryland was suspended by Mr Findlay on hearing of the restraining bill. After that panic was over, the alarm of the rise of prices in Europe and the expectation of there being still higher was so general that the independent Patuxenters would not listen to any price in the country. By this there is no purchase made by me in that government and should you have sent out ships for it, they will be unprovided for from that quarter. At the same time I wish how soon I could hear of one or two being sent out as, in event of the *Ocean* not returning in time, they would answer in her stead and even if she does return they might be loaded. At any rate we would have no difficulty in chartering them for ships here are in great demand. A commission from Virginia to Philadelphia for a vessel extends the limit for freight to £8 per tun which had been offered and refused as they had employment enough for their shipping until the ports were finally shut. I understand also that Mr Dick of Bladensburg has offered £8 10s. for a vessel which is expected soon to arrive at that place.

I am sorry to say that it is more and more apparent the store purchase will fall very considerably short of expectation. We had neither on Rappahannock or Potomac near so good an assortment of linen, which were particularly in demand this spring and summer, as many others. But the managers of each store will account for the causes of their respective deficiencies. They will also forward inventories of the goods on hand the first of June from which, on the trade opening, such schemes may be joined as you think will best answer the views you have for carrying it on, agreeable to what you write in your letter of the 12th May. I hope and expect the present purchase will be carried through at twenty shillings. This is now the height of harvest with us for small grain. The wheat crop will be exceeding large. The farmers are generally stacking it in the field but what other method they may fall on to preserve it, in the event of the non-exportation agreement being adhered to (which does not in my opinion admit of a doubt), I know not. I think you should not, on a supposition because it is

perishable that it will be admitted to be shipped to Britain, send out any ships without the most positive advice that it is so.

The copies of the ledgers are not yet finished. It is true we have assistants sufficient at Falmouth to do any business but two of them have been sick all summer, Mr Torrance and George Cuninghame, in so much that they have done little or nothing. I observe you persevere in requiring the original ledgers; they shall be sent.

As soon as peace is restored, I imagine the Assembly will continue the inspection law, indeed the additional tax on tobacco to be levied on its being continued is one of those for the redemption of the treasury notes, which were authorised to be emitted to the extent of any sum under £150 by a bill for the payment of militia drawn out into actual service last year.

It is true this bill had the same fate as the rest in not being passed into law; but I say that from the tax on tobacco therein mentioned, which is the most certain fund this country is possessed of, it is apparent that the Assembly intend to continue that law. We shall therefore, I apprehend, have no receivers and I think from what dropped in argument in the House during the present contest with Great Britain, the committees in the different counties will exert themselves to persuade the people not to carry their tobacco to the inspections, or any receiving houses, from an opinion if it gets into the merchants' hands that they would endeavour to ship it or that it may be carried off by small cruising vessels which may be in the rivers.

We may therefore infer, that unless a reconciliation takes place as soon as the Assembly meets, and continues the law before its expiration the 20th October next, that it will be some months after affairs are settled before any considerable exportation of tobacco can take place from Virginia.

I am not yet sufficiently informed to answer your queries relative to the *Catherine*, Capt. Thomas Paton, which arrived at Dunkirk in April straight from Virginia with a quantity of tobacco. This much I have been informed: that she loaded at Norfolk in February, either on account or under the direction of North and Sands, merchants there; the quantity is said to be 150 hogsheads. I have sent to Hampton for a copy of the clearance and shall note the contents hereafter.

The *Molly Mitchelson* from Whitehaven arrived at Norfolk while we were at Williamsburg. You will have seen from the *Gazette*, that the committee of that town ordered the ship and cargo directly back and that a certificate properly authenticated of the goods being actually reloaded in Great Britain, is to be produced to the committee by Elbeck, Ross and Co. They have got clear with more ease than I imagined.

That Mr Montgomerie for Ritchie and Co. did make a purchase on Nansimond is certain; it was done to make preparation for the *Fanny* expected in Potomac, where they were not provided for her. She accordingly after taking on board 200 hogsheads at Quantico fell down to Norfolk for the balance. They have since loaded at that place and Rappahannock, I believe, indiscriminately from their store collections and any cash purchase they have made. They have the *John*, a chartered ship and the *Mercury*. On board of the last Mr Henry Mitchell shipped 300 hogsheads, so that their cash purchase cannot be considerable and I dare affirm it was begun for the sole purpose I have mentioned.

I have not yet heard of the sale of the bills sent to Philadelphia, but I understand some have been returned from that place as unsaleable there for cash at any exchange. In one of your late letters you observe that Mr Henderson has been complaining for the want of money, and say that I certainly knew money might be procured in Philadelphia at some rate or other. It may probably from the exchange being so low and money so scarce at the last meeting, from another charge against my conduct. If such a charge should be thought of, I beg you may not judge by the event, but put yourself in my situation at the time, and consider the following particulars. It was in March before the scarcity of money was much felt here, and indeed before any quantity was required for the purpose of buying tobacco. Early in that month, I think the 18th, I wrote to Philadelphia to learn the course of exchange at that place. The answer I received was as I formerly mentioned to you, viz. 55 per cent. This would not have yielded here 15. At that time bills were selling in Virginia from 25 to 30 per cent. The meeting of the merchants was expected in little more than a month. Would any trader therefore have commenced such an operation or could any trade have been supposed to have supported such a one by which

there was a probable loss of 10 per cent in the course of a month, for the general opinion was that exchange at the meeting would not be less than 25? I am pretty certain, as well as that it would have actually been so had the meeting taken place in April.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co. by the *Cochrane & Mayflower*

Falmouth 19th July 1775

Since writing you the 7th by the *Jeanie*, Capt. McGill, copy of which is under cover, I have not been favoured with any of yours.

Last night I received from Philadelphia the produce in gold specie of the £1,000 bills consigned to Messrs Willing, Morris and Company the 15th as advised in my letter of the 23rd of that month. They were sold at thirty and forty days sight for 154 per cent, which I am advised is a higher exchange than most others have got. Consequently we fared somewhat better than our neighbours on this occasion. But after all, the operation will not net here 15 per cent if we are obliged to pass the gold at five shillings the penny weight, which will be generally the case.

There has been little or no business done for some time. Harvest is now over and I expect what tobacco is in the planters' hands will soon be brought to the inspection and parted with; the quantity cannot be much, and at any rate I think I may now venture to assure you that the general market price will not exceed twenty shillings. There may be more given to particulars but that will not affect our whole purchase, the highest price given having been expressly excluded this year from all agreements in this quarter of the country. The weather continues as favourable as could be wished for the coming crop of tobacco, which I suppose, though not so large as former years, will not be a short one. In what manner it is to be disposed of is very uncertain. No doubt endeavours will be used to bring as much of it as possible to the inspection during the month of August, and to the tenth of September to which time it is presumed many of the inspectors will continue the inspection, that it may be shipped off before the ports are finally shut.

That such stoppage will take place on the day last mentioned we have more and more confirmation: A declaration of the General

Congress, dated at Philadelphia the 6th inst. and just come to hand, is to me an ample proof of this matter. They therein take notice that the legislature of Great Britain, stimulated by an inordinate passion for unjustifiable power and desperate of success in any mode of conduct where regard should be had to truth, law or right, have, deserting those, attempted to enslave the colonies by violence and have rendered it necessary for them to close with their last appeal from reason to arms. They publish to the world the justness of their cause. They enumerate the injuries they have sustained; recapitulate the various methods they have pursued to gain redress; and those proving of no effect, they declare themselves reduced to the alternative, of choosing an unconditional submission or resistance by force, saying 'the latter is our choice as we will rather die free men than live slaves. But as we have taken up arms against violence actually offered, we shall lay them down, when hostilities shall cease on the part of the aggressors and all danger of their being renewed shall be removed and not before.'

From this declaration we may I think conclude that negotiation on either side is now at an end. The Congress in speaking of the reconciliatory plan which passed in Parliament the 27th February, call it an insidious manoeuvre calculated to divide. War must determine the controversy.

When I mourn for the probable events of this war which more immediately affect humanity I cannot help foreseeing the direful effect it will have on your trade and debts here. The one must be suspended for the present and many of the others, should it continue any time, will be totally lost.

But as this must be evident to you as to me, I will postpone any further reflection thereon until we know the determination of our provincial Convention now sitting at Richmond. Mr Stewart being in Virginia lately, he signed the disposition to you for his interest in your late copartnership, one of which is under cover.

Long before this reaches you I hope the *Cuninghame* will be arrived, and have delivered her cargo in good order. Enclosed is an invoice for the (CA) tobacco shipped by her, 108 hogsheads, 110,166 lbs, value £832 5s. 6d. stg, which you will please apply to the credit of that account, agreeable to what I wrote you by the ship, together with Capt. Henry's bill for £98 1s. 4d., Mr Findlay's

for £450, Mr Bogle's for £138 and account of craft here £96 15s. 1d. being all remitted by that opportunity.

Mr Torrance, who I advised you in my last was unwell, inclined to go to Britain. I have permitted it on the terms mentioned on the enclosed letter which I hope you will approve. In view of a stoppage of all trade we shall soon have too many assistants but at this time as he posted the ledger and there being a good deal of other writing, his going away is an inconvenience, provided he had been able, or would have attended.

I have received from Hampton copy of the clearance of the ship *Catherine*, and also of two other vessels cleared out at that port by North and Sands:

February 10th, ship *Catherine*  
of Philadelphia Thos. Mason & Co.  
owner there

April 15th, *Big Wolf* of  
Virginia

June 30th, sloop *Cedar* of  
Virginia

Thomas Paton, Master, for  
Lisbon with 20,500 staves

Martin Murphy, Master, for Dublin  
with 200 ft logs; 500 do planks;  
8,000 staves; 250 beesflour; 41  
hogsheads flax seed

Charles Rothing, Master, for  
Philadelphia with 18 pipes of wine,  
9.11.0.4 hemp; 1 keg of beeswax

I have this day drawn on you sundry bills per the following list which please to honour and place to <CA> account viz:

In favour of Mushett and Lawson	London at 60%	£228 8s.
" "	"	225
" "	"	77 10s.
" "	Glasgow	28 6s. 6d.
" Alexander & John Lithgows	London	134 2s. 9d.
" Alexander Brown	"	47 18s.

These are in payment of some tobacco intended for the *Cochrane*, in order for her immediate dispatch as it appears hazardous in those times to keep ships in the country. Mr Reid also drew on you the 8th instant in favour of James Wills and Co. on the same account.

1 set payable in London at 60%	£152 13s. 4d.
1 " " Glasgow "	61 1s. 1d.

These are in payment of some tobacco purchased at Williamsburg and which will be shipped on board the *Mayflower*.

Please to receive enclosed invoice of 98 hogsheads <CA> tobacco shipped on board the *Cochrane*, amounting to £923 15s. 8d.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co. by the *Mayflower*

Hobbs Hole 27th July 1775

On Tuesday I received per post a letter from Messrs McClachlan & Company, Port Glasgow, dated the 22nd May, advising that you had chartered the *Experiment*, Hugh Orr of 300 hogsheads, who was to sail immediately from Clyde to Hampton, and thereby for order. Having a letter at the same time from Mr Findlay informing that he had heard from Capt. Speir of the *Margaret*, of such a vessel being chartered, and giving it as his opinion that I should order the Captain to proceed to Potomac and to enter at the Maryland office *only*, as he thought the load might be made up in that government, I have wrote to Hampton directing Capt. Orr to proceed in conformity.

I have also to advise you that yesterday I chartered the *Lonsdale* of Whitehaven, James Gray, Master, of 430 hogsheads burthen at six pounds ten shillings per tun of four hogsheads for freight, one half of the amount thereof payable on the delivery of the cargo, the remainder at the end of four months thereafter, with two thirds of the port charges here and at Port Glasgow, and I am to put the tobacco alongside at Hobbs Hole in 50 days from the 22nd instant, or before the final shutting of our ports by order of the General Congress. But I shall send you a copy of the agreement thereafter. She is a new ship, staunch and well fitted. I intend her to carry off what of the store collections fall short of her burthen, by extending the <CA> purchase although at an extra price which I daresay from the present appearance of things will answer.

Under cover you have invoice for 176 hogsheads, 181,972 lbs, value £1,582 9s. 8d., shipped on board the *Mayflower*, Capt. James Crosbie, account of craft here £69 16s. and the captain's bill on you for £70 13s. 11d. which please to apply to the credit of by <CA> account.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co. by the *Peggy*, McKinlay

Falmouth 14th August 1775

Annexed you have copy of what I wrote you the 27th from Hobbs Hole by the *Mayflower*, Capt. James Crosbie. On reaching home I found there was a small error in the invoice of the <CA> tobacco per that ship which I have rectified per the enclosed copy making the amount £15,782 9s. 8d. sterling.

You have also enclosed a bill of loading for 358 hogsheads tobacco shipped on board the *Helena*, Capt. Roger Stewart with manifest for 22 hogsheads, 23,329 lbs, part thereof marked COM. and shipped from Dumfries store to the credit of whose account it is to be applied. The <CA> manifest for 209 hogsheads forwarded by the ship may not be exactly right but as Mr Ronald has not as yet furnished me with an account of the parcel from the eastern shore, this cannot be ascertained at present. Neither can I say for the same reason what is the account of the craft here. A copy of both shall be transmitted as soon as in my power. On the 22nd ult. I wrote you a letter in favour of Capt. Roger Stewart, desiring you to pay him or his order the freight, one half of the amount thereof and the import in the delivery of the cargo, and the other half in six months thereafter at the rate of seven pounds sterling per tun and the import confirm to agreement, which with the bill of loading, and the different manifests for the cargo was transmitted per the ship of Mr Patton, who I sent to Norfolk for that purpose and to whose letter accompanying these papers, and advising of the time the ship would sail, I refer. Before this reaches you I hope Capt. Stewart will have delivered his cargo in good order. He had the same directions you furnished the masters of the chartered ships from Whitehaven for regulating the stowage, the preservation of the cargo on the voyage, and in giving you advice on his arrival in Clyde, or, elsewhere. There could be no dressed staves procured at Norfolk, otherwise the usual proportion would have been forwarded. This, considering the quantity sent by each ship, will I apprehend be attended with no great inconvenience.

Since writing you last I have been favoured with your letters of the 23rd May per the *Potomac* and *Clyde*, and of the 7th June per the *Juno*. On the receipt of the last I forwarded it by express to Mr



Henderson, considering that since the *Ocean* was not arrived in the Clyde at the date of this letter, I concluded that she would not have returned or if she was returned that she could not arrive here in time to be loaded before the 10th September. I therefore gave it as my opinion that he should immediately and without waiting longer for the *Ocean* proceed to load the *Thomas* as soon as she arrived. When the messenger reached Richmond, Mr Henderson was down the country shipping 80 hogsheads for the *Lonsdale*. The letter was forwarded to Cabin Point, but not being there, Mr Kennan opened it and in consequence thereof was to set off after him and to pick up every hogshead for sale below, the *Ocean* having come to her moorings at Hoods that day the 10th. He adds: 'We shall be altogether unprovided for the *Thomas*, and I am afraid a sufficient quantity to complete her load is not to be procured although there were several small parcels for sale a few days ago'.

On receiving this letter from Mr Kennan the express sent to Richmond returned and without any letters from you per the *Ocean*. They, I suppose, were enclosed to Mr Henderson, and his assistants not attending properly to the orders given the express (that if he should not be at Richmond the letter was immediately to be sent after him and the messenger to remain at that place for an answer) dispatched it to him on receipt of Mr Kennan's letter and in this manner I am kept out of yours. I have not yet heard of the arrival either of the *Experiment* or the *Thomas*. The order for the former proceeding to Maryland on arrival stands as advised but I am very doubtful of the *Thomas* being provided for.

The General Congress has broken up; a new one is to sit as is said in September. Before this comes to hand you will have seen a second letter to the people of Great Britain; in that letter it is mentioned that they have again presented a petition to our sovereign and they say they are willing to treat on such terms as can alone render an accommodation lasting. But they do not propose to surrender their property into the hands of the ministry or vest the parliament with a power which may terminate in their destruction. This petition I am in hope may have the desired effect; if it has not you will early know, I think arguable to what I have formerly wrote: the sword only will terminate the contest which is shocking to think of.

Our provincial Convention resolved the 24th July that no flour, wheat or other grain, or provisions of any kind, should be exported from the colony to any part of the world from and after the 5th day of August until it should be ordered otherwise. But the Maryland convention not coming into this measure, I am advised they have taken off the prohibition, and continued those exports as usual to the 10th September. On the 29th July they resolved that the several inspectors of the public warehouses in this colony do, sometimes before the last of August, make sale of all transfer and other tobacco which may have lain one year in their respective warehouses for ready money. From these sales some provision may be made for the *Thomas*. However, I do not think there will be any considerable quantity of transfer at any of the inspections and the purchaser of the other must run a great risque of its being much decayed, if not altogether rotten.

The Convention is still sitting, deliberating on methods to put the colony into a position of defence. Considering that there will be no direct opportunity from this colony to Britain after the 10th September when our exportation ceases and being very desirous that our annual states should be forwarded before then, I gave directions that the inventories should be taken the 10th August, which I apprehend will be generally done by our factors. But I'm afraid it will be impossible to have states prepared in time. The weather continues as favourable as could be wished for the crop of tobacco. The quantity cannot yet be ascertained, it will not in this quarter, from what I can learn, be so large as former years.

Since my last I have drawn on you:

July 28th	In favour of Archibald Ritchie, payable in London on account of Dumfries store	£50
31st	In favour of William Carr, payable in Glasgow (CA) on account of Dumfries store	97 4s. 1d.

which please to honour.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co. per the *Lonsdale*

Falmouth 30th August 1775

Annexed is copy of what I wrote you 14th instant per the *Peggie*, Capt. McKinlay. Since then on the 16th in the afternoon, I was favoured with your letters of the 14th, 19th and 24th June with the enclosures per the *Ocean*. As a great part of the *Ocean's* homeward cargo of tobacco was afloat before her arrival, Capt. Ewing, I am hopeful, will not be detained and certainly will be ready to leave the country before the time our exports are due to cease. I have not yet heard of the arrival of the *Experiment* or *Thomas*. Mr Findlay I imagine is fully prepared for the former and I have the pleasure to advise you that we have nearly, if not altogether, provided a sufficiency of tobacco for the other, 140 or 150 hogsheads of which goes from Potomac and Rappahannock and the remainder from James River. As this is the case I am really uneasy that Capt. Crawford should remain so long out. On arrival he is directed to lie at Norfolk and we are endeavouring to put the whole of the tobacco on board good craft. I hope if one can be got for about 50 hogsheads in Potomac that it will be all at Norfolk by the 6th of September and I think if the ship is then arrived, as the captain will have copies of the manifests, that he may clear out by the 10th. However, as I look upon the tobacco to be exported when delivered from the warehouses, I do not apprehend that he will meet with any obstruction in loading, and that his sailing after the 10th cannot be deemed a departure from the Association.

Towards completing the *Lonsdale* load and in making up the above proportion for the *Thomas*, I have made sundry purchases of tobacco since the sailing of the *Cochrane* and *Mayflower* to the amount of 250 hogsheads which is chiefly at 19s. and 20s. stg. As you will see in the invoices by the respective ships, in part payment of which and towards performing former contracts since my last per the *Peggie*, I have drawn on you as follows in account of the (CA) cargo:

Aug. 16th In favour of Thomas Lawson payable in London at 60%	£ 40 13s.
Aug. 16th In favour of John Orr payable in London at 60%	100

Aug. 16th In favour of John Orr payable in London at 60%	46 18s. 2d.
Aug. 21st In favour of Martin Picket payable in Glasgow at 60%	97 2s.
Aug. 23rd In favour of Mushett & Lawson payable in Glasgow at 60%	17 3s. 5d.
Aug. 29th In favour of Muirhead, Hay & Co. payable in London at 60%	248 9s. 2d.
Aug. 29th In favour of Payne, Muir & Co. payable in Glasgow at 60%	153 15s. 9d.
Aug. 29th In favour of Robert Jardine payable in London at 60%	584 15s. 9d.
Aug. 29th In favour of William Love payable in Glasgow at 60%	86
	<hr/>
	£1,376 1s. 8d.

and on the 23rd ult. I drew on you on account of Dumfries store in favour of John Deans, place of payment left blank at 60 per cent, £251 8s. 7d. All of which please to honour and place to the respective accounts.

For eight or ten days past we have had much wet weather which I apprehend will be a prejudice to the crop of tobacco in some places, particularly that which is forward and on low grounds.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co. per the *Lonsdale*

Hobbs Hole 3rd September 1775

Under cover you will please receive invoice of 170 hogsheads <CA> tobacco shipped on board the *Lonsdale*, Capt. James Grayson, weighing 179,242 lbs and amounting to £1,698 2s. 10d. stg., Capt. Grayson's bill on you at sight for £36 19s. 8d. account of craft hire, £160 10s. and account for staves and hoops for the *Mayflower* and *Lonsdale*, £19 4s. 3d. stg. All of which you will please to apply to the credit of your <CA> cargo.

You have also enclosed manifests for 79 hogsheads 84,435 lbs tobacco under the mark COM, for 81 hogsheads, 87,175 lbs under the mark COC, for 14 hogsheads, 13,807 lbs under the mark COM ANN, for 79 hogsheads under that of <C>, with a bill of loading for the cargo being 423 hogsheads.

I hope Capt. Grayson will in due time deliver you the cargo in the usual good order, although he complains it has not been received

in the best. Enclosed is the charter party for the freight of the vessel, with which I beg you may pointedly comply, both with regard to his discharge in the limited time, and in the payment of the freight and port charges. After extending the missive of agreement for the vessel which you will also receive, a doubt arose what was port charges and when they should commence, I contending that it was contrary to equity that the charterer of a ship should be subject to any charge before the date of the agreement, to an opinion of Messrs Henry Mitchell and Neil McCaull, to which I have submitted, although I cannot help thinking it contains a contradiction in itself. Please to pay your proportion in conformity and advert to direct Messrs Ross and Will to retire Capt. Grayson's bill endorsed by me for the import on the tobacco and tunnage of the ship.

We had here yesterday a violent gust of wind and rain, almost as much so, as the September one in the year 1769 which it nearly resembled, and I am afraid it may have done considerable damage through the country as well as to shipping as to the crops of grain and tobacco. The effect thereof on the wharves and small craft here is evident.

On Thursday evening Mr Findlay came to Falmouth. As I was obliged to set off for this place early next morning I had not much time to converse with him. He seems doubtful whether he goes to Britain this fall. I was much astonished as well as concerned of being told that the *Experiment* was not arrived. As this is the case Mr Findlay has chartered the *Mermaid*, John Montgomrie, master, of 420-430 hogsheads burthen. Should the *Experiment* come in now, which indeed I do not expect, she is totally unprovided for.

I have not yet heard of the *Thomas's* arrival. We have been extremely lucky in these ships; in case the tobacco provided for the *Thomas* cannot be shipped it will be a heavy loss. This forenoon I forwarded per express from here to Richmond not having had it in my power to do it before the *Lonsdale* was loaded. Manifests for the Rappahannock and Potomac tobacco intended for that ship, being 193 hogsheads now all afloat.

I am sorry I was misinformed in what I wrote Mr Cuninghame a few days ago, with regard to the determination of the Maryland Convention relative to the time when tobacco would be deemed exported. It seems the truth is that it must be on board the ship and

cleared at the office on the 10th September. However, as the Virginia Convention has given no opinion in the matter, I still think if tobacco is afloat before that time a ship will not meet with any obstruction in taking it on board even a few days thereafter.

I am informed since I came here that, on a petition from the merchants in the neighbourhood of Richmond, the Convention had thrown out the test for which we had been told they had passed an ordinance.

As there will be some intercourse 'twixt the colonies on the continent and the West India Islands, that channel of correspondence 'twixt this and Glasgow may be during the suspension of trade the most safe, unless a packet is established. In the event of your willing by the way of Antigua, address your letters to the care of Messrs Hugh Campbell and Company desiring him to forward them by the first safe opportunity, giving the preference to Mr Archibald Ritchie's vessels.

An opinion has arisen with some that the Congress will open the exportation at their next meeting to take place in January, for grain. For my own part, unless the public affairs are settled, I do not think any such thing will happen. However, you may depend it will not long remain partial; if the ports are open for one species of produce they will soon be for all.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co. per the *Mentor*

Falmouth 5th September 1775

The foregoing are copies of what I wrote you per the *Lonsdale*. This per the *Mentor*, as Capt. Grayson had to call at Norfolk in order to procure two sailors, may probably be delivered before the others. Since I came home I have further drawn on you at this date in favour of John Glassell for £10 3s. 1½d. payable in Glasgow at 60 per cent on the <CA> account which please to honour.

I was happy last night in hearing from Mr McCaull who was applying for the freight, that Mr Wardrop had wrote him from Norfolk that the *Thomas* was arrived. If this is the case the greatest part of the tobacco we have on hand will be shipped in due time if no accident has happened to the craft in the late storm, it being then all afloat.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co.

Portsmouth 14th September 1775

On the evening of the 8th inst. per express from Hampton, Capt. Orr advised me of his arrival at that place with the *Experiment* on the 5th after a long passage of 14 weeks and 3 days. On being informed by Mr Findlay, as mentioned in my last, that as the *Experiment* stayed long out he had chartered the *Mermaid* in her room, I had wrote Mr Henderson if Capt. Orr should arrive while he was below dispatching the *Thomas* to endeavour to provide for him agreeable to your directions relative to these latter ships which might arrive too late to be loaded with tobacco or for whom we might be unprovided with such a load. But being apprehensive that Mr Henderson would have left this place probably without hearing of the arrival of the *Experiment* at Hampton, I came here yesterday with a design to make some provision for that ship, either by loading with tobacco which I might find afloat, or by making an agreement with the captain to send her to some other province.

On getting on board the *Experiment* I was happy to be informed by Capt. Orr that Mr Henderson had chartered the brig to Douglas Hamilton for Alston, Young and Company to load naval stores at Ocrecock Bar in North Carolina for Whitehaven at the rate of six shillings and three pence sterling a barrel for freight. Which, on seeing Mr Henderson he confirms, adding that he has sent you copy of the agreement with Mr Hamilton, and an indemnification and warranty to Capt. Orr for changing the voyage, to which you will no doubt pay due attention. I daresay as Capt. Orr declined to go to St Lawrence, and as the committee of Norfolk County would not permit the vessel to be loaded with tobacco, this is the best that could be done. I am afraid it will be a losing voyage. If so, it must be placed to the account of the projected purchase on Patuxent. I am sorry to be informed of Mr Henderson of his being so great a sufferer in the late storm, having no less than four craft drove ashore with 105 hogsheads of tobacco, the great part of which will be damaged, which will be attended with a heavy loss, as well as be the cause of detaining the *Thomas* some days in order to have part of it overhauled. The storm has been of a great injury to the country; it will shorten the crop of tobacco but in what proportion I cannot

say. The planters make a grievous complaint, which I am inclined to believe is better founded than their complaints of that kind generally are. On the 9th inst. I drew on you as follows:

In favour of Mushett and Lawson payable in Glasgow at 60%	£ 78
In favour of Mushett and Lawson payable in Glasgow at 60%	34 1s. 9d.
In favour of Payne and Muir payable in Glasgow at 60%	50
	<hr/>
	£162 1s. 9d

which please to pay on the <CA> account.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co. per the *Potomac*

Falmouth 15th October 1775

The foregoing is copy of what I wrote you the 14th ult. per the *Thomas* to which I refer. Since then I received per the *Annie*, Capt. Pollock, copy of your letter per the *Ocean* of the 24th June with those for James River which shall be forwarded.

Please to receive under cover copy of account current for 1,175 hogsheads tobacco purchased and shipped on the <CA> account with sundry vouchers on which it is founded, which I hope you will find right, leaving a balance of £805 13s. 11d. stg. to be drawn for. On the night of the 29th September there was a very severe frost which bit a proportion of the tobacco then on the field in this quarter and since then on the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th of this month we had a constant close rain which must have been a prejudice to what was housed. The weather is now fine and I apprehend there is very little of the crop remaining now in the field. The quantity made will not be considerable, but I should think after every disaster it has sustained it may be estimated at two thirds of our crop of 60,000 hogsheads.

At present there is no appearance of there being any market for what crop is made. All purchases are now suspended, and it is a doubt whether any tobacco in particular will be brought to the warehouses before peace is restored. I daresay no considerable quantity will. This, in my opinion, will be an advantage to you in the sale of the last exportation, from its holding out to the world a



belief of the merchants here that the non-exportation agreement will continue until American grievances are redressed, or until a reconciliation takes place which may be at a very distant period.

Those who had any negro clothing on hand from last year have now a quick sale for ready money, such goods being in great demand, as is salt. Of the last there was at Falmouth at inventorying a considerable quantity. It is now nearly sold off at 3 shillings per bushel. Neither of your stores have any other article as yet in much demand. In the sale the factors are obliged like their neighbours, by having an eye to hereafter, to allow some credit to particular customers, but credit in a general way except as above is abolished, and they will as much as possible sell what they can for ready money or tobacco which they will accept of on the terms mentioned in yours of the 29th December.

The annual states from Rappahannock and Potomac were forwarded some time ago, and I hope will meet with your approbation. You will observe there are longer sums due by all the stores, to discharge which is a great measure I am afraid bills must be drawn, as the respective factors will not be able, notwithstanding the large sum of paper money which will now soon be in circulation, to collect as much from the debt as will enable them to perform their engagements. However, this will be avoided as much as possible. At any rate the sum to be drawn for Falmouth store and its dependencies, will not, added to the bill already passed, exceed your limit for last purchase. On the 30th ult. I drew on you in favour of William Cuninghame, Dumfries, payable in Glasgow at 60 per cent for £150 stg. for a balance due to him on his wages account which you will please honour and place to the debit of that store for the ensuing purchase.

During the suspension of trade I have warmly recommended it to your factors to exert themselves to procure settlements and bonds from all their debtors. Time will show what success they meet with. I am doubtful it will not equal your expectation as numbers will be exceeding unwilling to subject themselves to pay interest while they are precluded from disposing of the produce of their estates. Should this be generally the case, which will be known in the spring, and if there is then no probability of peace being restored. I think it will be necessary for you to retrench your settlements, as the expense of

the different establishments will be very sensibly felt. Before then I expect to be furnished with full instructions.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co. (delivered by Mr Findlay)

Falmouth 19th December 1775

By the opportunity of the [blank] for London, I forward to the care of Messrs Ross and Mill four packets containing the annual states from all your stores on James River, which as they are too bulky for postage, and as there is some chance of the first copies being sent by a vessel from Norfolk to Glasgow, I have desired them to retain until they hear from you.

I have not received any of your letters since those per the *Annie*, Capt. Pollock, and we are extremely anxious for directions in what manner to act during the suspension of trade. I once thought we might be useful to you in that period in settling accounts by bond but am sorry to say we meet with little success therein.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co.

Falmouth 3rd February 1776

Since writing you the 15th October and 13th November, copies of both of which I apprehend you will receive by the conveyance of the *Rockingham*, I have been favoured with yours of the 1st, 2nd, 6th and 8th of September which came safe to hand.

The price you say you would willingly take for a part of your tobacco does not correspond with my expectation. However, I observe you think if the non-exportation is adhered to for twelve months that it must rise. That the stoppage of our trade with Britain will continue until a reconciliation takes place is not to be doubted.

By this opportunity you will receive authentic duplicates of the list of outstanding debts and abstracts of the inventories of the goods and effects on hand at your stores on Rappahannock and Potomac which I hope will reach you in safety.

I once thought we might have been of use to you during the suspension of trade in settling and adjusting accounts by taking bonds for the sums due by the respective debtors but I am sorry to say we meet with little success therein. We are therefore a dead expense to you without your reaping any advantage and you will

please to consider whether it will not be eligible to withdraw your factors from the country until a renewal of trade takes place. Certain it is you are now at the annual expense of £3,000 stg., the greatest part of which in my opinion is needless. However, I shall not willingly take upon me to do anything therein until such time elapses as I may have your answer to this letter which I beg may be as soon as in your power. With regard to public affairs I refer you to the newspapers and with regard to our situation to the passengers by this ship.

In conformity to what I wrote you the 15th October I have obliged since my last to draw on you as under which please to honour and place to the respective accounts.

1776		
Jan. 12th	In favour of Hislop & Blair payable in London at 60%	£200
	on Falmouth store	
Jan. 24th	In favour of William Allinson payable in Glasgow at 60%	69 15s. 2d.
	⟨CA⟩ cargo	
Jan. 24th	In favour of William Allinson payable in Glasgow at 60%	100
	Dumfries store	
Jan. 24th	In favour of William Allinson payable in London at 60%	200
	Dumfries store	
		<hr/> £569 15s. 2d.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co. per the *Hope*

Falmouth 24th March 1776

The annexed is copy of what I wrote per the *Rockingham*. Since then on the 14th inst., by a stranger from Norfolk, I received your favours of the 17th and 26th October. Some persons' curiosity had prompted them to examine the contents as they came open to hand. And on the 25th I received per express from Mr Henderson your other letter of the 6th November. The contents of the whole I have noted.

Some little time after the expiration of the inspection I went to Petersburg with an intention to see what could be done in prosecuting the plan Mr Horsburgh had recommended for carrying on the business in the country during the continuance of the non-

exportation agreement but the public affairs were so greatly different from what it was supposed they would be at the time the scheme was thought of that the proposer had given up all intention of carrying it into practice. We are indeed in such a situation as to make it imprudent to purchase tobacco, for there is no prospect of our being able to export what might be purchased, as the transactions of every day tend apparently to place a reconciliation with Great Britain at a greater distance, and without there was such a prospect I think good debts preferable to so perishable a property. At the same time in my opinion very little tobacco could be procured for such goods as we have now on hand or in discharge of debts at such a price as it might be thought to be worth, when regard was had to the many risks it would be liable to before being shipped. On this part of the plan I have therefore given it as my opinion, in which Mr Reid coincides, that no purchase of tobacco should be made until there was some prospect of the unhappy dispute with Britain being settled, which I am afraid is at a great distance. But this opinion is nevertheless subject on James River to the determination of what your factors on that river may conclude on after they have maturely weighed every circumstance. We are here in anxious expectation for the arrival of the commissioners whom we are told are to treat with the united colonies. The hope and desire of every moderate man is that the negotiation may have a happy end. However, I am much afraid it will be otherwise.

On the other part of the plan I would observe: if moving the whole goods on the one river to one place would occasion their being sold quicker and to better advantage it would be a proper measure. But the goods at the different stores on Rappahannock and Potomac are much dissorted. At the same time they are nearly of a kind at each, that is to say, there is the same articles at one store as at the other; consequently the more places they are at, there is a greater chance of selling them by retail. I believe they could not be sold by wholesale but for this I am not very anxious, as there may be as many retailed in the course of the year, the produce of which from the difference of advance on the two sales may amount to what would be got for them all in the wholesale way. At the same time you will be at no more expense than you would otherwise be at, as it is necessary for sometime yet to keep up the different settlements

for the purpose of adjusting the debts. Hitherto there has not been much in circulation as high as the falls of the rivers. However, all kinds of goods begin now to be in more demand than they have been for some time past, and I would hope what we have got will be chiefly sold before the month of September.

There may be about £700 stg. at each of the settlements of Fredericksburg, Falmouth and Dumfries; there are very few at Culpepper or Fauquier. I think it would be best that the whole were sold before the trade is renewed and therefore, after as many has been sold by retail as possible, endeavours must be used to lump off the residue. On James River they have not many. I have written Mr Henderson that if he found they could not be sold for money at the particular store where they now are, and if he thought such a sale either by wholesale or retail could be affected at Petersburg or any other place, I was of opinion they should be moved there without delay. You will observe, that I think it is the most eligible plan on Rappahannock and Potomac to let the goods remain where they are and to retail as many as we can for some time; the different factors having an eye to the goods in each others' store in case they should find a demand for any one article which they have not got and which the other can supply. Yet in case the commissioners, if any such be coming, are not successful in their negotiation or if the miserable prospect of war continues, I think it will be necessary to move the goods both there and to the southward to one place on each river, to employ one or more persons to take care of them and to break up all the other stores as the expense of the whole cannot be borne. This measure will be delayed as long as there is the smallest hope of peace or until I hear from you in answer to what I wrote on that subject in my last.

I have intimated to your assistants here your permission for their leaving the country if they choose to do it. They seem inclinable to stay until they see what turn affairs will take. Indeed I do not know any opportunity they could depart with.

In my former letters you will see, I have warmly recommended it to your factors to settle all their debts by bond or otherwise, and you will also see they meet with little success therein which I am sorry to confirm. There is little or nothing collected, and from appearances it will be some time before as much money is procured

in that manner as will discharge the debts due by the different stores in the country.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co.

Falmouth 11th May 1776

In conformity to your letter of the 6th November last, and at their pressing salutation I have discharged sundry of your assistants from their indentures viz. Colin McDonald from Culpepper, James Douglas and James Galloway from Fredericksburg, George Cuninghame and Dugald Bannatyne from Falmouth, and James Buchanan from Dumfries. The two last intend to go to James River in expectation that the (Congress or) Convention will allow a vessel to be fitted out there in line of the *Hope* stopped sometime ago. The others proceed to Baltimore and Philadelphia and will take a passage either in a vessel bound to the continent of Europe or to the West Indies from whence they can return to Britain. To enable them to put those intentions into execution we have advanced them some money here and furnished each with a bill of exchange on you for £21 stg. being the amount of what has been lately charged for a passage, which we have debited them with and taken their drafts for the whole balance they are owing after settling the wages to the time of their discharge. They think, considering the circumstances attending their departure, that you should pay for their passage home, which I have been told has been done by other companies for their assistants who were in a like situation. But as the indentures do not specify that you are obliged to find a passage back, and as you have not authorised me to do it, in your letter above mentioned, I could only refer them to you and I beg you will consider of their demand and make them what allowance you think proper. They are deserving young men and I think entitled to it if any are. The bills that I have drawn on you are as follows:

May 10th	In favour of Colin McDonald	60	£21
	„ George Cuninghame	„	21
	„ Dugald Bannatyne	„	21
	„ James Buchanan	„	21
			<hr/>
			£84

The three former are on account of Falmouth store and the last on account of Dumfries store. Mr Reid furnished Mr Douglas and Mr Galloway with theirs of the same date with the above. They are if necessary authorised to make the whole payable in London which you will please to honour and you have under cover their drafts viz.

Colin McDonald on Donald McDonald, Merchant in Glasgow at 60%	£ 3 14s. 2d.
George Cuninghame on Mr Cuninghame of Bandalock at 60%	37
Dugald Bannatyne on Mr Cuninghame, Esq., Merchant in Glasgow at 60%	30
James Buchanan on John Napier Esq. of Ballikinrain at 60%	60 17s. 3d.

The three first you will place to the credit of Falmouth store and the other to that at Dumfries. You have also under cover the acquital they have granted on being discharged.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co. Original per Robertson,  
1st copy per Mr Colquhoun

Falmouth 22nd July 1776

Your favour of the 9th and 14th December per the *Cumberland* packet was forwarded to me the last of May from Williamsburg by Mr Archibald Govan who advised me that he received it open from the Committee of Safety and was told that it came open to them from the fleet. There was no letter for Mr Findlay enclosed. That gentleman left Philadelphia about the first of last month in a vessel bound for Lisbon and I hope will be with you before this gets to hand.

Since writing you the 24th March, copy of which you will receive by this opportunity, I have found it necessary from the situation of affairs to make preparation for as many of your factors and assistants as possible can be spared to leave the country. Accordingly the chief part of the European goods at your settlements on Rappahannock and Potomac have been delivered to Mr Robert Patton at Fredericksburg amounting (after deducting ten per cent for damaged and unsaleable articles) to £1,441 stg. per his bills on John Hamilton Esq. remitted you in my letter of the 1st inst. to which I refer. Which bills are to be retained in your hands until

retired by drafts from me or some other of your factors in favour of Mr Patton as he is to pay us the amount of the sales in current money in order that the debts you are still due in the country may be discharged. By having no saleable goods the factors in this quarter will have it in their power to make a final closure of their books before they leave the colony which our Convention have allowed foreigners to do, and which liberty will be embraced by the greatest number of your factors and assistants as soon as they can meet with an opportunity, we purposing to keep no more than what may be necessary to take care of your property. Indeed I do not know if any will be permitted to stay but on terms which we cannot reconcile with our principles, or what may be called by some the prejudice of education. Be that as it may, as some of your factors will I hope be arriving at Glasgow in the course of a few months, and give you full information relative to your business in Virginia, it is needless for me to say more at present than that their staying here would be of no advantage to you as they neither can adjust or collect the outstanding debts.

By this opportunity you will receive inventories of the goods and effects on hand at the different stores on Rappahannock and Potomac at the time the residue was delivered to Mr Patton and a list of the debts which have been created or undergone any change since the last list sent you as also the cash account, current account and the amount of the general expense attending the management to that time, from which you will be able to make a state of your affairs on those rivers.

Mr Henderson who writes you by this conveyance will inform you that the same preparation is making by your James River factors and assistants for leaving the colony as we are doing on Rappahannock, to him I refer for particulars.

There is a crop of tobacco growing and the weather has I think in general been favourable for it, but I cannot form any judgement what may be the quantity.

This will I hope be delivered by Mr Andrew Robertson who I have discharged from his indenture in the same manner I did those mentioned in my letter of the 11th May. He also expects that you will pay for his passage to Britain, concerning which I cannot say more than I have done in that letter. I therefore confirm it in a



particular manner with regard to Mr Robertson. Meantime, you have enclosed, his bill of this date on Mr John Hamilton, merchant, Glasgow for £21 stg. in your favour in place of one I have drawn upon you of the same date and of the same value in his to procure him a passage in a sloop from York River to Britain, both of which must be entered to the debit and credit of Falmouth store. Mr Bannatyne and Mr Buchanan, mentioned in the letter of the 11th May, not having found any opportunity from James River, have returned here and remain ready to embrace the next which offers. You have also enclosed the acquital Mr Robertson has granted on being discharged.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co.

Falmouth 6th August 1776

Referring to what I wrote you the 22nd July, which I apprehend you will receive herewith, I have enclosed you copy of account current for the (CA) cargo to the first instant which I hope you will find justly stated. This will be delivered to you by Mr Walter Colquhoun who, with Mr William Cuninghame and Mr John Likely, takes a passage on a sloop from James River to Glasgow. They leave the colony in terms of the missives under cover which I hope you will approve of. At settling with them I have drawn upon you the following bills being for the balance due to them on their wages account to the first of this month, which I hope you will duly honour:

1776

Aug. 5th

In favour of Walter Colquhoun account Falmouth store	
1 set payable in Glasgow 60%	£ 50
In favour of Walter Colquhoun account Falmouth store	
1 set payable in Glasgow 60%	68
In favour of William Cuninghame account Dumfries store	
1 set payable in Glasgow 60%	25
In favour of William Cuninghame account Dumfries store	
1 set payable in Glasgow 60%	143 13s. 11d.
	<hr/>
	£286 13s. 11d.

Not having anything further to add relative to your business but what those gentlemen can communicate.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co. by the *Betsey*,  
Capt. Dugall via Cork

New York 27th June 1777

I wrote you the 24th inst. by the *Elisabeth*, Capt. Bennett, from this place for Glasgow with prize tobacco, and who will sail with a convoy for Cork, that Messrs Henderson, Reid and Horsburgh with their assistants and myself arrived here the morning before having been obliged to leave Virginia in consequence of a resolve of the Legislature for putting in force the statute compelling the subjects of enemies to leave the state in a certain time.<sup>1</sup>

This will be delivered by Mr Dugald Bannatyne, who with William Gillies and James Buchanan (and sundry other of your assistants from James River) take a passage in the *Betsey*, Capt. Dugall, for Cork. At settling the store books in Virginia they had credit for wages at the time of their departure; since then I have advanced them money and there has been other alterations relative to their passages to Europe, having taken up the bills I had formerly granted for that purpose agreeable to the enclosed account which you will please to attend to making them what allowances you think proper.

To Messrs W. Cuninghame & Co. per Mr Horsburgh in the *Howe*,  
New York

New York 22nd July 1777

Having wrote you twice since my arrival at New York by this convoy and expecting to see you at Glasgow soon, I shall only at this time desire you to receive the following papers viz:

Falmouth Store

List of outstanding debts

Inventory of goods and effects on hand

„ tobacco on hand

list of packages wherein the books and accounts of Falmouth and Fauquier store are packed and the manner they are disposed of

Copy of a letter to Adam Newall

Account current from Aug. 1776 to May 1777

List of bonds

<sup>1</sup> On December 18, 1776, the Virginia House of Delegates passed a resolution providing that foreign merchants should depart within forty days

## Fauquier Store

List of outstanding debts

,, of bonds

Inventory of goods and effects on hand

account current from August 1776 to May 1777

account re John Likely £9 6s. stg.

## Dumfries Store

List of outstanding debts

,, of bonds

Inventory of goods and effects on hand

accounts current from August 1776 to May 1777

List of packages containing the books and accounts of Dumfries store lodged with Mr William Carr

Account re William Cuninghame £9 5s. 3d. stg.

Mr Patton who goes passenger in the *Nelly*, Capt. Wilson, will deliver you the lists and other papers belonging to Culpepper Store as well as those for the sale of goods at Fredericksburg on the 4th inst. (but which through a mistake I believe was called the 4th June). I drew on you for £51 15s. 5d. stg. in favour of Campbell, Watson and Co. payable in Glasgow at 130 per cent which please to honour (whatever may be the date) and place to my account.

I omitted to mention in my letter of the 27th June that Colin Campbell's bill on Donald Campbell Esq., includes £17 8s. 7d. stg. credited to Michael and John Wallace in the Dumfries store books for a passage in the *Allison*, but as that ship was not permitted to come to Virginia he declined leaving the colony. You will therefore deduct that sum from the bill and extinguish the debt due to the Wallaces. In like manner the debt due to those gentlemen on the Falmouth books must be cancelled by crediting my now running account with the same having settled with William Gillies for his part in the manner he will show you, and the obligation is void on mine.

To Mr W. Cuninghame

London 26th August 1777

On my arrival from Virginia at New York I wrote the Company by the *Betsey*, Capt. Dugall, which I expect you have received

before this time, and by Mr Horsburgh in the ship *Howe* for Cork we transmitted copies of lists of debts and accounts current for all your settlements in Virginia to the time we left the country exclusive of Culpepper and the sale of goods at Fredericksburg. Those Mr Patton carried with him in the *Nelly*, Capt. Wilson, for Glasgow and I hope they will all be delivered about the same time as we parted with the Cork fleet a few days ago. To them I beg leave to refer and hope you will find every account clear and distinct, at least as much so as our situation would admit of. What occurrences have happened since balancing the books in Virginia relative to Mr Henderson, Mr Reid and myself can be settled on our reaching Glasgow. When the above fleet left New York we had an intention of staying sometime longer at that place but being apprehensive that we could not procure any opportunity in a short time after the sailing of three ships for London we engaged a passage in one of them the *Edward*, Capt. Lawrence, and having come up with the Cork fleet at Sandy Hook, on the 29th July we sailed from that place and arrived at Dover yesterday morning after a very agreeable passage. At engaging with Capt. Lawrence I advised the company that each of us had drawn on them of the 27th July in his favour for £26 5s. stg. payable in Glasgow at 30 per cent which we hope will be duly honoured. Having been taken up all this day in procuring lodgings I have no time to write to you at any length but shall do myself that pleasure tomorrow or next day. Meantime I beg leave to refer you to the passengers in the *Howe*, *Allison*, *Nelly* and *Betsy*, for particulars relative to affairs in America.

As we have come to England we have an inclination to see this city and some of the manufacturing towns. We shall not therefore, if agreeable to you, be in any great haste in getting to Glasgow. But to enable us to put those inclinations into exertion we shall be obliged to you for some money, which you will please to order us at this place or address me that our bills will be good for what we may want.

We bring no public news but what you will have seen in the *Gazette* before this reaches you. Only we spoke to a schooner at Sandy Hook who informed that he had seen Lord Howe's fleet off the Delaware. This makes a report which they have today probable, viz. that Sir William Erskine with 5,000 men had taken possession of Philadelphia.

To Mr W. Cuninghame

London 30th August 1777

I make no doubt but you will be fully informed of the situation of affairs in Virginia from Mr Horsburgh, Mr Patton, Mr McKinnon and other passengers of the *Howe, Nelly & Co.* but I think it may be my duty to say something on the subject. Early last fall there were sundry purchasers of tobacco in different parts of Virginia but chiefly on Potomac and Rappahannock on commission from Philadelphia. This was the occasion of receivers being appointed by the purchaser at several of the public warehouses and the price ran from fourteen to eighteen shillings. At the meeting of the Assembly soon thereafter they passed an act reviving the inspection law and placing it on much the same footing as formerly with a few exceptions, particularly that the country was not to be liable for the tobacco while it continued in the warehouses. This took place in December and is to continue for one year. During that month a considerable quantity was passed at the warehouses which procured a ready sale, and as commissions from the northward became more frequent and given with more latitude with regard to price, while the British Army was making a rapid progress through the Jerseys, the price rose before Christmas to 22s. 6d.

At that time it was the universal opinion that General Howe's army would soon take possession of Philadelphia by which means the credit of the paper money would be greatly hurt, and at the same time an effectual check given to the recruiting service particularly in the southern provinces. From this prospect every person of common discernment was anxious to get clear of what of the states' bills of credit he had on hand which, had not the bad weather set in about a month before Christmas, would have raised the price to a very great height. But the weather put a stop to any purchases at the warehouse at that time as no tobacco could be brought there. The timorous holders of the money were therefore obliged to go to the planters' houses and buy their crops at the then ruling prices to be delivered at a future day. At that favourable prospect of a settlement to our public affairs, we determined to take what tobacco we could in collection of our debts and even to purchase for money while the price continued within any reasonable bounds.

But few of the planters would allow what tobacco they brought to the warehouse to go in discharge of their debts, pretending as they had been long without any market, they could not do without the money that proportion of their crops would raise to purchase necessaries for their families and pay their tradesmen. And we could command but little money to lay out in that way, as it required the greatest part of what we could raise to pay off our creditors.

The unhappy capture of the Hessian detachment at Trent Town and the subsequent skirmishes in the Jersey, which were magnified to be greatly to the advantage of the American arms, blasted the agreeable prospect of a speedy settlement, had a most powerful effect, tending to complete the new levies then making in all the colonies, and at same time re-established the sinking credit of the paper money. By which means tobacco was not in so much demand for a few months, but when the weather in the spring permitted the inspection to go on again the demand and price increased, which may be ascribed to sundry purchasers for the Congress who having found that tobacco was the best produce they could export to Europe, their agents were industrious in picking it up in every quarter of Maryland and Virginia. But I apprehend the rise of the price was chiefly occasioned by the enormous quantity of paper money in circulation as this without any other consideration had a natural tendency to increase the value of all produce and more especially of tobacco, looked upon as of a more permanent quantity than any of the others. But being joined with the uncertain validity of the currency, it made those who held any quantity exceedingly desirous to get clear of it; in consequence the price of tobacco rose from the former price to 25s. to 30s. and even forty shillings.

These prices were esteemed great by the planters who are taught that the paper money is as good as any that they have formerly been used to make them willingly part with their crops for that article. By this decision of the planters a very considerable proportion of their crops were carried to the warehouses and disposed of before we left the colony. I suppose the quantity might be from 20 to 30,000 hogsheads and from what I can learn since and the backwardness of the campaign I apprehend the same madness continued through the summer unless the planters found the money would answer no purpose, they being even prevented from paying great

parts of their debts, as those to whom they were owing had been expelled from the colony. In this light the expulsion of your factors from Virginia is a most favourable circumstance. For you may depend upon it, that had we remained there a little time longer, the money, from its answering no other end, would have been poured in upon us as payment of your debts, which we durst not have refused and which if we could convert into any real property, it must have been at a rate far exceeding its value.

It is true few of the planters for some time expressed any desire to discharge any debt they owed, more especially those due to British merchants which they all entertain an opinion will be cancelled. But before Mr Reid and myself left Fredericksburg and Falmouth we had sundry tenders of the states money made us as payment of bonded debts. Thus our being ordered to leave the country was a sufficient reason for our refusing. By some I believe this tender was made from a principle of honesty, but the greatest number had no other view, knowing that we could not receive it, than getting clear of the interest, presuming that it will be deemed a tender at a future day on a supposition that the debts are not forfeited.

A proportion of the tobacco so carried to the warehouses and sold has been shipped for France and the French West India Islands, but the greatest part remains in the warehouse, and I would flatter myself from the good outlook which His Majesty's squadron keeps in Chesapeake Bay that they will not attempt to send much more. If so it must remain in the warehouses and should the British Army penetrate into Virginia it may be destroyed by the people agreeable to their usual frenzy to prevent it from falling into the hands of these they call their enemies. Our situation was such latterly in Virginia that I cannot even guess at the quantity shipped: the two years crops, that is 1775 and 1776, may not much exceed 60,000 hogsheads. What the present one may be I cannot say. An attempt was generally made for a crop of tobacco in both Maryland and Virginia but the prospect when we left the colony was very indifferent and I should think it would be wrong to estimate the Virginia crop at more than one half or from that to two thirds of a full one of 60,000 hogsheads.

The friends of government in Virginia were much amazed last winter that the British did not take possession of Philadelphia which

the Americans fully expected as they confessed there was not any force sufficient to prevent it. And we were exceedingly disappointed on reaching New York to find in place of marching through the Jerseys to Philadelphia that General Howe was withdrawing his army from that province. No doubt he has sufficient reasons for his conduct and I think it ill becomes a person unacquainted with those reasons to censure him. The destination of the expedition was kept a profound secret at New York; the general opinion directed against the New England provinces. It was therefore with some surprise that we were informed at the Hook that the fleet had been spoken of Delaware. In what manner, to what place their operations will be directed can only be guessed at. Gen. Washington with the rebel army remained, by the best account when we left New York, at Morristown in the Jerseys and may consist of 20 to 25,000 men. Were this army dispersed I do not think the Americans could raise another; at least the tobacco colonies could not furnish their proportion. It may therefore be the intention of Gen. Howe to cut off Washington's retreat to the southward and put him 'twixt two fires, Burgoyne's army and his own. On the other hand Gen. Howe may direct his operations against Maryland and Virginia, while Gen. Burgoyne marches against the Northern Provinces. In that case Gen. Washington will be obliged to divide his army to oppose them.

What the event of the campaign may be it is not for me to determine. Certain it is that the people in Virginia in general profess themselves hearty in the cause they have engaged. But were a force to march against them it might occasion a very great change as there are few people more fickle, more easily elated by prosperity or more depressed by adversity. Besides I look upon the Negroes to be a dangerous internal enemy could they meet with any support. On all those accounts should Gen. Howe be successful in dispersing Washington's present army I am inclined to believe that the southern provinces would submit. On the whole all that can be said is that their submission may be a work of time or it may be accomplished in the course of this campaign. In the former case the price of tobacco should keep up in Europe; in the other I apprehend it would fall, but that fall might by circumstances be prevented from being very rapid as little or no tobacco might be exported from



either of the colonies for some considerable time after the submission, either from the rebels destroying what was on shipboard and in the public warehouses or from none being permitted to be shipped to Britain until the colonies were declared at the peace of the King and their ports opened. This was the case when we were at New York with regard to that port, but I have understood since I came here that Gen. Howe has been empowered to open it and such power for what I know may be extended to his future conquests.

From the above and what you will learn from the passengers in the *Howe, Nelly* and Co. you will be able to judge in what manner to act relative to the sale of the tobacco which I presume you have still on hand, and in establishing a plan for collecting a future business there. I shall be glad to be informed of the plan you fix upon; at present I need only add that it will meet with my hearty concurrence and believe also that of all your factors.

To Mr W. Cuninghame

London 6th September 1777

Since writing you of the 26th and 30th ult. to which I refer, I have been favoured with yours of the 27th. I am much obliged to you for the contents and pleased at the attention you so early paid to what I might want here. Some money I must draw on your letter of credit but cannot yet say how much.

Our situation was such in Virginia for a considerable time before we were expelled from the colony, that I do not recollect any one circumstance which merits the attention of Lord George Germain<sup>1</sup> or Mr Robinson.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, we brought no news but what is current in London. I believe I shall not therefore make use of the letters of introduction you were so kind to enclose for those gentlemen.

Under cover is a receipt for Mr Reid, Mr Henderson and my baggage which we have shipped as there expressed on board the *Glasgow*, Capt. Duncan, and which is to be forwarded to you on arrival at Carron. Be pleased to pay the freight and other charges on receipt and oblige.

<sup>1</sup> (1716-1785), Secretary of State for Colonies, 1775-82

<sup>2</sup> John Robinson (1727-1802), M.P., Secretary to the Treasury, 1770-82

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SCOTTISH HISTORY SOCIETY

REPORT

of the 96th Annual Meeting

The 96th Annual Meeting of the Scottish History Society was held in the North British Hotel, Princes Street, Edinburgh, on Saturday, 11 December, 1982, at 11.15 a.m. Professor Rosalind Mitchison, President of the Society, was in the Chair.

The Report of Council was as follows:

The seventeenth volume of the Fourth Series, *Stirling Presbytery Records, 1581-1587*, edited by Dr James Kirk, was issued to members in May this year. The volume has proved of interest to many members of the Society and has been well received by them. This was the volume for 1981, delayed from last year. The publication for the current year, *The Government of Scotland under the Covenanters, 1637-1651*, edited by Dr David Stevenson, is in an advanced state of preparedness and will be issued to members before the end of the year, thus restoring the Society's normal publication schedule.

The next volume to be published by the Society (in 1983) will be *The Knights of St John*, edited by Rev. Dr P. H. R. Mackay, Dr I. B. Cowan and Mr Alan Macquarrie. The following year, 1984, will see the publication of *A Scottish firm in Virginia: William Cuninghame and Co., 1767-1777*, edited by Dr T. M. Devine.

The Council of the Society has accepted for future publication a proposal by Professor R. J. Adam to edit the Calendar of Fearn Abbey (which was extensively annotated during the sixteenth century) and the Protocol Book of William Gray. These will be published as a single volume providing a comprehensive picture of Easter Ross in the sixteenth century. Details of all other volumes accepted for publication were contained in last year's Annual Report, and the Council would be interested to hear from members as to other historical topics or themes that they would like to see reflected in future volumes; such suggestions should be addressed to the Honorary Secretary, Dr Stevenson.

As the Annual Accounts (which, it should be noted, cover only eleven months due to the change in the Society's financial year) indicate, the financial situation of the Society remains reasonably healthy. But the substantial contribution made to the Society's income in recent years by the sale of Past Publications will almost certainly decrease rapidly in future, as stocks of many volumes run out. In the light of this and rising printing costs, the Council feels that it may be necessary to raise the annual subscription from £8 to about £10 with effect from November 1983. This would mean that the present subscription rate has remained unchanged for three years, and that the rise would be less than the increase in printing costs over the period.

The three members of the Council due to retire by rotation are Rev. A.

Ian Dunlop, Dr Walter Makey and Dr Annette Smith. In their place the following will be proposed to the Annual Meeting for election to Council: Dr Marinell Ash (who is a producer with BBC Scotland), Professor James B. Caird (Department of Geography, University of Dundee) and Dr Rosalind Marshall (who is an Assistant Keeper at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery).

During the past year 4 members of the Society have died, 8 have resigned and 18 have been removed from membership for non-payment of subscription. Thirty-one new members have joined. The total membership, including 215 libraries, is now 778, compared with 777 in 1981.

The Chairman of Council, Mr A. D. Cameron, presented the Annual Report, surveying the current publications. Noting that the membership figures remain constant, he encouraged members to take out covenants to increase the Society's income. He paid tribute to the retiring members of Council, especially Rev. Ian Dunlop who had personally delivered volumes in the Edinburgh area, thus saving the Society the cost of postage. The Treasurer then presented his accounts, emphasising that they were for an eleven-month accounting period.

On the motion of Mr Ian Grant, seconded by Dr Grant Simpson, the Report and Accounts were approved; Dr Ash, Dr Marshall and Professor Caird were declared elected to membership of Council.

The President delivered an address on 'The population of Scotland in 1748-49', after which Professor Barrow proposed a vote of thanks.

ABSTRACT ACCOUNT OF CHARGE AND DISCHARGE OF  
THE INTROMISSIONS OF THE HONORARY TREASURER  
for 1 November 1981 to 30 September 1982

GENERAL ACCOUNT

CHARGE

I. Cash in Bank at 1st November 1981:	
1. Sum at credit of Savings Account with Bank of Scotland	£9,000·00
2. Sum at credit of Current Account with Bank of Scotland	743·41
3. Sum at credit of Special Investment Account with Trustee Savings Bank	674·24
	<hr/> £10,417·65
II. Subscriptions received	5,569·67
III. Past publications sold	1,093·39
IV. Reprints sold	179·00
V. Royalties on reprints	43·32
VI. Interest on Savings Accounts with Bank of Scotland and Trustee Savings Bank	884·72
VII. Income Tax Refund (1980-81)	319·51
VIII. Donations	40·00
IX. Prepublication orders ( <i>Knights of St John</i> )	421·00
X. Sums drawn from Bank Current Account	£10,926·11
XI. Sums drawn from Bank Savings Account	£3,000·00
	<hr/> £18,968·26

## DISCHARGE

i. Cost of publications during year ( <i>Stirling Presbytery Records</i> )		£9,612·21
Cost of printing Annual Reports, Notices and Printer's Postages, etc.		788·88
		<hr/>
		£10,401·09
ii. Insurance Premiums		42·19
iii. A.G.M. (North British Hotel)		72·50
iv. Miscellaneous Payments		410·33
v. Sums lodged in Bank Current Account	£11,409·30	
vi. Sums lodged in Bank Savings Account	884·72	
vii. Funds at close of this account:		
1. Balance at credit of Savings Account with Bank of Scotland		£6,834·59
2. Balance at credit of Current Account with Bank of Scotland		483·19
3. Balance at credit of Special Investment Account with Trustee Savings Bank		724·37
		<hr/>
		8,042·15
		<hr/>
		£18,968·26

GLASGOW, 21 October 1982. I have examined the General Account of the Honorary Treasurer of the Scottish History Society for the year from 1 November 1981 to 30 September 1982, and I find the same to be correctly stated and sufficiently vouched.

JOHN A. SMITH  
Auditor

SCOTTISH HISTORY SOCIETY

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1983-1984





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