Washington's Letter to Governor George Clinton

To Governor George Clinton

Head Quarters, Valley Forge, February 16, 1778

Dear Sir: …

I mean the present dreadful situation of the army for want of provisions, and the miserable prospects before us, For some days past, there has been little less, than a famine in camp. A part of the army has been a week, without any kind of flesh, and the rest for three or four days. Naked and starving as they are, we cannot enough admire the incomparable patience and fidelity of the soldiery, that they have not been ere this excited by their sufferings, to a general mutiny or dispersion.

… I am, on my part, putting every engine to work, that I can possibly think of, to prevent the fatal consequences, we have so great a reason to apprehend. I am calling upon all those, whose stations and influence enable them to contribute their aid upons so important an occasion; and from your well known zeal, I expect every thing within the compass of your power, and that the abilities and resources of the state over which you preside, will admit. I am sensible of the disadvantages it labours under, from having been so long the scene of war, and that it must be exceedingly drained by the great demands to which it has been subject. But, tho' you may not be able to contribute materially to our relief, you can perhaps do something towards it; and any assistance, however trifling in itself, will be of great moment at so critical a juncture, and will conduce to keeping the army together till the Commissary's department can be put upon a better footing, and effectual measures concerted to secure a permanent and competent supply. What methods you can take, you will be the best judge of; but, if you can devise any means to procure a quantity of cattle, or other kind of flesh, for the use of this army, to be at camp in the course of a month, you will render a most essential service to the common cause. I have the honor etc.