

Excerpt from F. A. Porcher's "A Memoir of Gen. Christopher Gadsden"

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. . . Governor Rutledge left Charleston April 12, 1780, with three of the Privy Council. Lieutenant-Governor Gadsden, with the other five remained to await the issue of the siege. A month afterwards, May 12, Lincoln surrendered his army, and by the terms of **capitulation** Lieutenant-Governor Gadsden, together with all others who held any **civil authority**, were held as prisoners of war on **parole**.

It is needless to say that General Gadsden, though a prisoner, was firm to the cause of independence. Though restrained by their paroles from doing anything **injurious** to the cause of His Britannic Majesty, yet the silent example of himself and others who fell with him, men who were **revered** by their fellow-citizens, had a powerful influence in restraining many from exchanging their paroles as prisoners for the protection and freedom of British subjects. After the **unsuccessful attempt of General Gates** to relieve the State, Lord Cornwallis regarded it as a conquered province, and utterly violated the terms of the capitulation. On the 27th August, General Gadsden, most of the civil officers of the State, and some others, whose attachment to the cause of the Revolution was **conspicuous**, were taken, early in the morning, from their beds and their houses, and escorted by armed parties to the **Exchange**, whence they were sent to a guard ship, and a few days afterwards to St. Augustine.

This was a gross violation of the capitulation. General Moultrie, from his quarters in Christ Church Parish, whither he had been assigned on parole, wrote to **Colonel Balfour** to protest against the outrage; to which the **commandant** replied, that his letter was written in such exceptionable and unwarrantable terms that it should not be answered. Nothing **daunted** by this **repulse**, the General made another effort in behalf of the unfortunate prisoners, to which he received a verbal answer, that the commandant would do as he pleased with the prisoners, for the good of His Majesty's service, and not as General Moultrie pleases.

On their arrival at St. Augustine, the prisoners were offered the **liberty** of the town on their parole. This General Gadsden **indignantly** refused to give. "I gave my parole once," he said, "and it has been shamefully violated by the British Government; I shall not give another to people on whom no faith can be **reposed**." He was told that a dungeon would be the alternative. "Be it so," he answered, "I give no more paroles to British officers." The next day he was confined in a dungeon of the castle, w[h]ere he remained forty-two weeks. A common soldier, honoring the invincible firmness of the hero, offered to supply him with light – for he was allowed no other light but that of day, as this was contrary to orders, the General refused to accept the offer. Among other objects to which he devoted his enforced leisure was the study of the Hebrew tongue, and he came out of the dungeon a more learned man than when he entered it.

British severity did not deny them books, but the prisoners were studiously kept misinformed respecting affairs at home. The prospects of America were brightening, but they were led to believe that ruin was hanging over them. They were threatened with being called upon to **expiate** the death of **Major Andre**. They patiently endured all threats and outrages, and not one **sued** for British protection.

After ten months of **seclusion**, General Gadsden was liberated and sent with his fellow-prisoners to Philadelphia. So

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strictly had they been kept in ignorance of the progress of the war that it was not until they reached Philadelphia that they heard of **Greene's successful campaigns** after the **disastrous defeat of Gates**. Gen. Gadsden **hastened** home to assist in recovering South Carolina from the British, and was immediately elected a member of the Legislature, which met in Jacksonboro, 1782. Governor Rutledge, laid down his office before the Legislature, and Gen. Gadsden was elected to the vacant place. He declined the honor, however, saying:

“I have served you in a variety of stations for thirty years, and I would not cheerfully make one **forlorn hope** on an assault on the lines of Charleston, if it was probable that with the certain loss of my life you would be reinstated in your capital. What I can do for my country, I am willing to do. My sentiments for the American cause, from the Stamp Act downward, have never changed. I am still of opinion that it is the cause of liberty and of human nature. If my acceptance of the office of Governor would serve my country, though my administration would be attended with the loss of personal credit and reputation, I would cheerfully undertake it. The present times require the **vigor** and the activity of the prime of life; but I feel the increasing infirmities of age to such a degree that I am conscious I cannot serve you to advantage. I therefore beg that you would indulge me with the liberty of declining the **arduous** trust.”

He was **indulged** in his request. But though he declined the office of **Chief Magistrate**, he continued to serve the State both in the Assembly and in the Council. Notwithstanding the long confinement, which he had suffered in the castle of St. Augustine, and the immense loss of property which the war had caused him, he was one of the few who, in Jacksonboro Legislature, opposed the **bills for confiscating and amercing the estates of those who had opposed the revolution**. In December of that year he had the satisfaction of witnessing the departure from Charleston of the British fleet and army, and the consequent restoration of the whole State to the government of her own citizens. From this time forward his life was devoted to private pursuits, except in two cases. In 1788 he was a member of the Convention which ratified the **Constitution**. To this object, all the aspirations of his life were devoted. He had in 1765 founded the American Union by his exertions in the Provincial Assembly, and he had the pleasure, twenty-three years afterwards, to assist in ratifying it by an act which he fondly hoped would make that Union **perpetual**. In 1790 he was a member of Convention which formed the new Constitution of the State. He was now sixty-six years of age, and he lived fifteen years longer a private citizen with the good old man’s blessings – love, honor, obedience, troops of friends. In August, 1805, an accidental fall deprived him of life.

In **compliance** with the instructions contained in his Will, his body was deposited in the family cemetery, in the western church yard of St. Philip’s, and the grave leveled – no stone marks the spot of his final resting place.

From Porcher, F. A. *A Memoir of Gen. Christopher Gadsden, Read Before the South Carolina Historical Society*. Charleston, SC, 1878. Available at the South Caroliana Library.

Glossary (in order of appearance)

Capitulation - Charles Town's surrender in May 1780

civil authority - state's government including Gadsden as the Lt. Governor

parole - conditional freedom to citizens of Charles Town as long as they did not fight the British or cause problems.

Injurious - causing injury or hurt

Revered - respected

unsuccessful attempt of General Gates - Gates defeat at Camden

conspicuous - obvious or stands out

Exchange - a building in Charles Town that contained a dungeon in the basement

Colonel Balfour - a British officer in charge in Charles Town

Commandant - a commander

Daunted - to be discouraged

Repulse - rejection

Indignantly - angered by a what is perceived to an injustice or mean

Reposed - place trust in

Expiate - to atone or make up for a wrong

Major Andre - A British officer who had been killed

Sued - asked for

Greene’s successful campaigns - Nathaniel Greene took over the Continental Army in the Carolinas and he and his subordinates waged successful battles at Cowpens and Guilford Court House

disastrous defeat of Gates - the Battle of Camden, which the British won

hastened - went quickly

forlorn hope - a very hazardous attack

vigor - strength

arduous - difficult

indulged - granted

Chief Magistrate - state governor

bills for confiscating and amercing the estates of those who had opposed the revolution - the

South Carolina Assembly met in Jacksonboro outside of Charles Town and passed bills that seized or heavily taxed the landed estates of Loyalists.

Constitution - the U.S. Constitution

Perpetual - eternal

Compliance - fulfilling or obeying