



# Letter from Maj. Gen. Nathanael Greene to his wife, Catharine Greene

Providence, Rhode Island,  
2 June 1775

**I**t had been happy for me if I could have lived a private life in peace and plenty, enjoying all the happiness that results from a well-tempered society, founded on mutual esteem. The social feelings that accompanies such an intercourse is a faint emblem of the divine saints inhabiting eternity. But the injury done my Country and the chains of slavery forging for posterity calls me forth to defend our common rights, and repel the bold invaders of the Sons of freedom. The cause is the cause of God and man. Slavery shuts up every avenue that leads to knowledge, and leaves the soul ignorant of its own importance; it is rendered incapable of promoting human happiness, piety or virtue; and he that betrays

that trust—being once acquainted with the pleasure and advantages of knowledge and freedom—is guilty of a spiritual suicide. I am determined to defend my rights and maintain my freedom, or sell my life in the attempt; and I hope the righteous God that rules the world will bless the Armies of America, and receive the spirits of those whose lot it is to fall in action into the paradise of God, into whose protection I commend you and myself; and am, with truest regard, your loving husband.

N. Greene



**Above:** Catharine Littlefield Greene Miller (1809), painting, by James Frothingham. **Right:** Nathanael Greene (1783), painting, by Charles Willson Peale. Greene was widely regarded as Gen. George Washington's most able subordinate commander. (Both images courtesy of Wikimedia Commons) Excerpt of letter taken from *Quarterly Review: A Journal of University Perspectives* (1951), Vol. 58 via Google Books. Graphic elements by [www.rawpixel.com](http://www.rawpixel.com)/[www.freepik.com](http://www.freepik.com).