ARENT VAN CURLER & THE FLATTS
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DOCUMENTS

Letter of Arent van Curler to Kiliaen van Rensselaer, June 16, 1643

[1][1] [Laus Deo! At the Manhatans, this 16th of June, 1643] [Most honorable, wise, powerful and very discreet Sir, my Lord Patroon:]

[With humble greetings, this will serve to wish your Honor and your dearly beloved wife good fortune, prosperity and steady happiness. On the 4th instant, I received your Honor's favor,[2] of which I have noted the contents and to which this will serve for answer.]

[First, touching the serious discontent which your Honor feels] toward me because the accounts and books are not being sent over, I have not much to say. But I am not wholly to blame for this. For the accounts and books that concern me, we can quickly get ready, but as to the farmers, one can get no accounts from them, and van der Donck does not even speak to them about it, according to his instructions, nor has he done anything about it as long as he has been in the colony. I have thus far [only] once had accounts from some of the farmers. One could not make head or tail out of them, for they mentioned only disbursements and no receipts, and moreover charged: to this one, so much—to that one, so much, without once indicating what the charges were for. They could specify very well what they had spent on account of the patroon, but as to what they had spent for their own use they knew nothing about, although they were very careful to remind me to book what was to be charged to the patroon. I told them that I would do nothing of the kind; that they must deliver to me a true, clear and correct account, which I would send to the honorable patroon for his Honor's approbation and that then, as soon as an answer was received, I would, if his Honor so ordered, credit their account with the amount. To this, the farmers said: "Why should we render accounts to you, if you will not pay them here at once, without referring them to Patria?" In fine, the matter has been neglected. But, please God, as soon as the next [ship] comes, the accounts will be sent to you. For so far as I myself am concerned, I hope that his Honor will not be so displeased as he has been. For I bind myself to make good to his Honor whatever may have been stolen or be short in the accounts. But, so truly help me God Almighty, I am not conscious that willingly or knowingly, as long as I have been in your Honor's service, I have defrauded your Honor, or that in any manner I have sought my own profit or tried to enrich myself, as others do, [3][whose duty it is] to protect the interests of the patroon [against] those who might defraud your Honor. I shall tell your Honor no tales, but by the next ship send over [iv] [sufficient proofs thereof.

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[1] 'Figures in brackets indicate the pages of the original manuscript, lv meaning first folio verso or reverse. Parts of the text enclosed in brackets are destroyed and have with slight changes been supplied from O'Callaghan's translation in *History of New Nelherland,* 1:456-65. Here and there a word has been added in brackets by the present translator to make clear the meaning of the text.

[2] See the patroon's letter to van Curler, dated March 16, 1643, printed in *Van Rensselaer Bowier Manuscripts*, p. 658-68.

[3] At this point the words "whom your Honor has sent" are crossed out.

[As to your Honor's wishing to know what the farmers' houses cost, it is impossible for me to inform you. I have never had any account thereof, as I have told your Honor before. As regards the cost of my own building, I hope that shall not be found wanting. I have kept every bill of it. Further, I shall furnish at the same time an account of what my housekeeping comes to. His Honor will find therein a few items of what I have presented or given away, as I have sometimes given some presents] to the principal chiefs [of the Indians] in order that we might entertain friendly relations with them.

As to your Honor's not knowing how your account with the Company stands, this will serve [to inform you] that I have never settled, nor even [attempted to settle the account], as Mr. Kieft charged so much for freight and customs that I have invariably referred the matter to the lord patroon. Kieft has several times asked me to settle the account here, but I have always declined to do this, as I feared that in doing so I might easily burn myself, for the charges which he makes for freight, duties and meat and drink are contrary to the provisions of the granted Freedoms. Your Honor thinks that I here deduct all the freight and duties from what is due for the wheat. Your Honor is mistaken about that and will please hold me not guilty thereof,[4] for I never thought of liquidating the account with Kieft in that way. Now that I understand your Honor's intention, I shall never deliver another schepel of wheat to the Company, unless they pay me cash, or unless I receive other orders from your Honor. Moreover, I have delivered very little grain; last year only [twelve *lasts]* (990 bushels) and then once more a small quantity, which was delivered by [my] order. But the farmers have heretofore delivered grain to the Company on their own authority. One hardly knows at times what becomes of all the grain that is grown in the colony, or what has been done with it. But at the first opportunity I shall send your honor an extract which through friendship has been made for me from Mr. Croll's book, from which your Honor will see and find what has been consumed by the farmers and been paid for in wheat, whereby your Honor has been wholly defrauded and deprived. But as soon as the accounts of the farmers are rendered, your Honor, having this extract, will be able to judge who intends best by the lord patroon.

[2] [As to the lord, my master's, recommendation to hold in high regard the counsel of Domine Megapolensis and in everything to follow his Reverence's advice, I have never failed to do so, but have always communicated to him whatever occurred here, to have his opinion thereon before I decided to undertake anything, and I have always gratefully accepted his Reverence's advice. Further, I shall use my utmost diligence to collect the rest and to enter all the debits and credits, in beavers and seawan. I shall] then, without fail, send you everything [by the next opportunity]. As to the duffels, I have thus far not noticed any damage [worth mentioning], but received them all in good condition.

Your Honor further orders me in your letter to have some stallions gelded. I had this done last spring, to the number of 12, and two more

[4] *geliefl my d\aervan\ excusabel le houden;* will please hold me excusable thereof.

recently, being 14 in all. Thanks be to God, it succeeded very well, without any of them being injured or killed, although there were some eight or nine year old stallions among them. There are nine more stallions in the colony besides the yearlings, to wit: two for breeding purposes on the five farms on the east side; Andries de Vos and van Nes together have one for their use; Brandt[5] and van der Doncq together have one, and Broer Cornelis one ditto. On the Great Flatt *{de groete Vlackte)* there are four, of which two of the poorest will be cut next fall. Hereafter, the patroon will each year doubtless have a much greater increase than he has had so far, for heretofore the stallions pursued the mares so that they could not be touched, whereas now they are so tame that it is surprising. And formerly, owing to their being chased by the stallions, we sometimes had to spend half a day looking for the horses and then came home without them.[6] Tuenis Dircksen is the master gelder.[7] I have paid him one pound Flemish for each stallion he operated on. Last spring I demanded of the farmers all the horses and cows that were in excess of the number allowed them according to their contract. I have at present at least twenty draft horses on the Flatt *{Vlackte)*, together with 14 milch cows, but they are mostly young stock.

Further, as to the letter written from the [village of the] Mahicans,[8] you will please not be surprised about this, for by great luck I came down from above four or five days after the departure of the sloop and overtook it there by reason of contrary wind. Having received a day or two after the departure of this vessel the resolution of Pieter Cornelissen and Broer Cornelis, [2v] [I went on board the sloop and there hastily wrote a short letter to your Honor, because I thought it was necessary to advise you.]

[Your Honor further writes that you understand that I had placed Labatie[9] on the Great Flatt, and promised him twenty guilders a month, and your Honor asks what farm work he can do. Those who wrote that to your Honor lie like rogues, for I never thought of doing so. My intention was that] Lebatie should pass the winter [on the Flatt] to trade, as during the winter there is good trading there from above, but there has never been any question of monthly wages, for since the expiration of Lebatie's bounden time he has never asked or demanded any increase in wages, but always said that he would leave that to the discretion of the lord patroon. But I suspect that this report was sent to your Honor

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5 Brant Peelcn. He and van der Donck each had a farm on Castle Island. He died before May 1, 1644, when Cornelis Segersen van Voorhout succeeded him on the farm. *Van Rensselaer Bowicr Mss.*, p. 806, 833.

6 *ende voor desen mosten door het Jaegen van de hengstcn te met y% dach de peerden gaen soecken, ende quaemen dan schacdeloos thuys.* O'Callaghan translates: "And, before this, we were obliged, according to the age of the studs, to go look for the horses to the half day, and they came home safely." It is possible that the word *schacdeloos* applies to the horses, in which case it does not mean that they came home safely, but that they came home tired out from running, the word *schacdeloos* being used in the nautical sense of disabled, instead of the ordinary sense of undamaged.

7 Teunis Dircksen van Vechten. On May 27, 1670, Governor Lovelace granted the privilege of gelding horses to Dirck Teunissen van Vechten, who had been instructed in the art by his father. *Annals of Albany*, 4:17.

8 *by de Mahicans;* which O'Callaghan translates as "by the Mahicanders," as if the letter was written by the Indians, instead of by van Curler.

9 Jean Labatie, from Verdun, France. In a memorandum of farms in the colony, dated 1651, "de Vlackte" is called the best farm, consisting of two islands, one of 16, and the other of 5 morgens, and 23 morgens of mainland, making a total of 44 morgens, or 88 acres. *Van Rensselaer Boivier Mss.*, p. 743.

by van der Donckq,[10] who is much troubled by this undertaking, because he is not allowed to live there and who still daily, in my absence, goes about finding fault, saying that we expect much profit from it for the masters, but that it will fail. However, I have nothing to say for the present. The work is only begun and I hope, please God, to have next autumn as much grain in the ground as the best farm in the colony. I have at present about 10 to 12 morgens of oats planted and, had there not been so many hidden stumps in the land, I should have had quite a bit more sown, which now still lies fallow. There will this year be much more to do, but the first year is the worst. I firmly believe that all the farms together have not had so much clearing to be done as this Flatt alone. They are all hidden stumps and roots, which are not noticed until the plow strikes right on them.

Your Honor further writes that you do not want any farm for yourself.[11] I shall therefore keep together an exact account of all the expenses incurred thereon and then, if you still do not want it, I shall request of your Honor, as I have already done, to be preferred over all others with reference to the said Flatt, and I shall then, according to circumstances, contract for it with your Honor and willingly share the expenses. I am certain that there is no other farm in the colony that will prove less expensive to keep up than this, or that will sooner repay the outlay, and this from wheat alone, without counting the increase of cattle. If it please God to grant His blessing on the grain, I hope that within two years all the expenses of the farm will have been made good.

Last spring I had a house built on this Flatt, 30 feet long, covered with tiles, for the carpenters and the farmhands to live in. [3] [Moreover, I had contracted with Jan Cornelissen, carpenter, for a large farmhouse. He promised to begin it in mid April, but has not yet done so. From May to this date, I believe he has not worked fourteen days, having been drunk all the time.[12] I have frequently demanded of him to go on with the work, but he always asked for an extension of time and does not care to begin, because I have made an advantageous bargain with him. He must build for 700 guilders a house 120 feet] long [by 28] feet wide; 40 feet is [set aside] for dwelling purposes, leaving 80 feet for the *Bouwhuys*[13] The dwelling part is to be floored above and below, and he is to build a cellar, [20 feet long] by 28 feet wide; a half-jutting chamber *(hangh Camer)* for the servants to sleep in; a bunk *(kooi)* for the foreman in the *Bouwhuys;* box stalls for the stallions, and further a horse and cow stable and whatever else appertains thereto, and that subject to the inspection of persons conversant with such work and who understand carpentry. The other carpenters would not build it for a thousand guilders, so that he is not very anxious for the job. I let the contract to him while he was sober, in the presence of Domine Jo[hannes],[14]

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[10] See the patroon's letter to Adriaen van der Donck, *Van Rensselaer Bowier Mss.*, p. 635.

[11] Cf. *Van Rensselaer Bcnvier Mss.*, p. 666, where the patroon speaks of the farm on the Great Flats as his own farm.

[12] Van Curler seems to have made a mistake and to refer to Jan Teunissen, the carpenter from Leyden, who is mentioned in *Van Rensselaer Bowier Mss.*, p. 646.

[13] *Bouwhuys;* meaning the rear part of the building, used for stabling purposes and the storage of farm implements and feed.

[14] Doinine Johannes Megapolensis.

Mr. Abraham[15] and Anthony de Hooges and immediately committed it to writing. I shall be obliged to have the house erected by others under protest, for the work can not admit of further delay, if it is to be under the roof before winter. For before everything else the cattle must have their stabling. I had the thatch for the house all ready last fall and stacked up near the place where the house is to stand.

As to the tobacco of Albert Andriessen and his brother,[16] as far as I am aware, one half of it belongs to you, for the said tobacco was planted during the term of his contract. Your Honor further directs me to pay this sum here in merchantable goods. That is all right. But there is still an issue or difference between us, which is this: Albert has heretofore violated the placards and in addition abused the lord patroon and the whole council, so that he was condemned to pay a heavy fine. I shall therefore now deduct this fine from the amount to be paid for the tobacco which he delivered. The fine which he owes for fighting, for opposing the placards and for the scandalous language amounts to 312 guilders. We should long ago have levied this sum by execution, but I have patiently waited for the delivery of the tobacco.

As to the answer which your Honor sent to the claim of Andries Hudden, I shall give an extract [from your letter] to Mr. Kieft and speak to him about it.

[3v] [As for the church, it is not yet contracted for, nor even begun. I wrote last year to your Honor that I had a building almost ready, namely, the covenanted work,[17] which would have been for Dom. Megapolensis, but this house was not to Dom. Johannes' taste, although in other respects it was altogether suitable for him, so that I have laid it aside. That which I intend to build this summer in the pine grove *(in het Greynen Bosch)*, will be 34 feet long by 19 feet wide. It will be large enough, for the first three or four years, to preach in, and can afterwards] always be used as a [residence for the] sexton, or for a school. I hope [that your Honor] will not take it amiss, as it happened [with good intention].

Regarding the crystal near Machiel [Jansen's house, of which your Honor] writes me that I should send over some more samples, I have urged M[achiel Jansen] and others sufficiently to dig it up, but they do not care to do it, apparently because they dread the labor, and it will [not] come out [by it]self.

Furthermore, the lord patroon is much surprised that so little care has been taken of the vines which his Honor sent over. I planted them in the garden, but they were killed by the frost, like the others which I myself brought to this country. It is my opinion that they can not stand the high water either.

As to the [inventory] blank sent by your Honor, it will hereafter be followed for the horses as well as for the cows. I wish that you had sent it before, so that I might have given you greater satisfaction. Further, your Honor is surprised that [Albert] Andriesen has such privi-

[15] Surgeon Abraham Staets.

[16] Arent Andriessen Bradt.

[17] Probably a translation of *aenbesteedde werck*, meaning perhaps merely the frame of the building, for so far as the contract had been let.

lege that no inventory is taken of his cattle. He says bluntly[18] that he will not allow any preemption and, what is more, that he will not give your Honor any part of the cattle at all, although he bought the cows while he was still under contract with your Honor in connection with the mill company.[19]

Further, I shall send by Willem Turck[20] as many peltries as I can get together.

Your Honor is surprised that all my letters mention haste. This, in short, will serve in explanation. The ships which arrive here have sometimes been 14 days or more at the Manhatans before we receive any tidings or intelligence thereof. Then, when news is received, the sloops remain only 5, 6, or 7 days, so that we must make the letters ready in a hurry. Your Honor says that this ought to be done beforehand. This could be done very well if we did not have to answer your Honor's letters, for in doing that we may as well at the same time advise your Honor of the affairs of the colony. However, as long as your Honor wishes it that way, it shall hereafter be done, for in all things I am bound to follow the patroon's orders as far as it lies in my power to do so.

[4] [As regards your Honor's instructions to inquire what price wheat commands in Virginia, I can not very well undertake that. But so far as I hear and understand, it sells very well there, but it should be sent there ground into meal. If your Honor should plan to send the ship thither, she should be well provided with strong liquors, which are much in demand there, together with duffels and wide linen. Tobacco can be had there at 2 or 3 (stivers a pound less?) than the price in Holland. All the grain which will be delivered to me, I shall keep provisionally until further order, should your Honor be pleased to send a ship. Henceforth I shall] furnish no more grain to [the Company].

As to the farmers selling the wheat at 8 or 9 guilders a *mudde* (3 bushels), that is indeed true, but I can not say who they are. I hear that at least 5 or 6 *lasts* (412.5 to 495 bushels) were thus sold [last spring], but van der Doncq paid no attention to it, nor has he tried to prevent such fraud. Your Honor also writes that I must call upon van der Doncq and [Pieter] Cornelissen to aid me. They do not care nor even try to look after their own offices. How, then, can they aid me? And they are the dogs that bite me and daily seek to render me suspected, which van der Doncq sufficiently endeavors to do and has already succeeded in doing, as I can see from your Honor's writings. But what he does and undertakes to do will no doubt reveal itself in its own time. I shall for the present say no more about it. Domine Megapolensis also knows about his actions.

Your Honor further writes that van der Doncq complains about the impertinence of Lebatie. This will serve for answer. Van der Doncq is very selfseeking and grasping.[21] Several times, when I was absent, or at the Manhatans, this van der Doncq came and gruffly told Lebatie

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[18] *seyt Bodt uyt.* O'Callaghan has taken *Bodt* to be the same as *bode* and hence translates: "The messenger says that he will not allow any preemption."

[19] See *Van Rensselaer Bmvier Mss.*, p. 676-77.

[20] Willem Turck was supercargo of the ship *Swarle Raeven* (Black Raven), which sailed in 1643.

[21] *Van der Doncq is seer eygenbatich ende tot sich treckende.* O'Callaghan translates: "Van der Doncq is very covetous and monopolizing."

to give him duffels, or perhaps seawan, or other goods. Thereupon Lebatie said that he had no orders to give out any goods. Why had he not asked for them before, while I was still at home; that he must wait until I should return, and such like things, too long to relate; so that by and by hatred became so deeply rooted that they challenged each other with rapiers.[22] The same he has also done to de Hooges, whom he called an informer and moreover has struck, and thus he also acts toward me, spreading false reports about me to your Honor and among the colonists, in order to render me suspected. [4V] [If he imagines that on account of his arrogance he will be allowed to do as he pleases, he is mistaken, but much must be overlooked for the sake of the consequences].

[As to what your Honor writes about the delivery of the cattle, this proceeds from the brain of Broer Cornelis. That he will not deliver up the same, nor pay for them immediately, is true. He has frequently spoken of it in my presence and moreover endeavored to stir up others to do the same].

[As to the resolution to send Willem Juriaensen, baker, out of the colony, I have had for a long time ample reason thereto. But no one would second me. Then he openly accused the lord and master of being a dishonorable man, whereupon he was condemned in a heavy fine. This was well. Furthermore, the residents][23] continued for two or three years [to employ this same] Willem Juriaensen, who carried on their trade [with the Indians], to the very great detriment of the honorable lord, and almost destroyed and ruined the whole trade.

As to your Honor's statement that I need not regulate myself so strictly according to the price of [the peltries], but should disregard the same, in order to keep the strangers out not only by authority, but by outbidding them, this will serve:—The trade heretofore has always been at six handfuls of seawan. Last year the residents as well as the colonists gave 7 to 7 1/2 handfuls. I also gave that. As soon as they noticed that I and the Company's commissary gave that much, they gave 9 handfuls, and last spring 10 handfuls, so that at last the price became so high that we on the part of the colony and the commissary at the fort jointly resolved to draw up an ordinance providing that neither the colonists, nor the residents, nor the Company's servants, on pain of a heavy fine and confiscation of their goods, should presume to trade with the Indians [for furs] at more than 9 handfuls of white seawan, or 4 1/2 handfuls of black seawan, and that none, on pain of confiscation as aforesaid, should go into the woods to trade. The order was that the officer should enforce it, but he has never attended to it, nor been willing to do so, and when he was told to look into the frauds and abuses, in order to prevent them as far as possible, he gave for answer that he did not wish to be the most hated man;[24] secondly, that he did not

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[22] *so dat den haet te met so diep is ingewortelt. dat sy malcandercn met degens hebben uytgeeyscht.* O'Cal-laghan has: "So then hatred became so deeply rooted, that they pursued each other with swords."

[23] On Sept. 29, 1641, the patroon wrote to van Curler: "You were under a great misapprehension in understanding by 'residents' the farmers or other inhabitants of the colony. I mean by that term such people as Goyver and the like who come to trade in the colony without authority from the Company and have no consent from me to do so." In this letter, van Curler seems to use the word in the sense intended by the patroon.

[24] *dat hy de tjuaetste man niet en wiide wesen.* O'Callaghan translates: "that he would not consent to be the worst man." The meaning is perhaps is that lie did not wish to be the *kivade man,* or scapegoat.

care to make himself distrusted by the colonists, as his term of office was short. Last year, we together resolved to issue an ordinance that no residents, on pain of confiscation, should presume to come with their boats within the limits of the colony. This brought great complaints from the colonists, who demanded to know where they should obtain their goods for their private needs. The council thereupon promised the colonists that if there were any goods to be had at the Manhatans or elsewhere, I should procure them for them, on condition that they were to pay immediately for the goods which they would receive from me; that I would have nothing to do with assignments of accounts, but that they must pay me in cash and that I was to remain the [sole] merchant. They were all satisfied with this [5] [and promised to adhere to it and to assist me. We further resolved on the next court day to issue another ordinance for the purpose of strengthening the first, namely, that no inhabitants of the colony should presume to buy any goods from the residents. It so happened that a few days later a sloop arrived with some goods. Immediately a number of the colonists came to me and said: "This and that are come; nobody must make any purchase there, you gave us the promise." To this I replied: "What I promised, I shall perform and accomplish."] I inquired [if they had any] beavers [wherewith to buy these goods and wares.] They answered, "No! You must purchase them and debit us with them in the account," which I was wholly unwilling to do. So that each one went and bought what he wished, as well duffels as other goods. Domine Megapolensis and I then sent for van der Doncq and told him that he should go [quietly] with his helper *(dienaer),* Hans Vos,[25] and search the several houses. First, he went to Reyer Stoffelsen's house. There he chatted, without once making a search. Then he went to Willem Juriaensen's in the same manner, and so forth. Further, he went to Dirck Jansen's, at the mill, where he was told that there were three pieces of duffels and, as he had a hatred for him, he took them. Then he went to the house of Cornelis van Merkcrck. There he also had a little chat, without once making a search. Likewise, at Broer Cornclissen's, he never made a search, but only asked: "How are all your cows?" and looked at them and went away,[26] although he knew perfectly well that there were duffels there. Returning thence and going home, he stopped at the house of Claes Jansen van Nyckerck who, he knew, also had duffels, and said: "Claes, I shall come here tomorrow to make a search. If you have any duffels, put them in the cellar, which I shall not search." Claes himself told me this and promised to give me an affidavit of it, which I shall send your Honor by the next ship.

Furthermore, I made a contract last fall for the building of a house for Domine Megapolensis, which was to be ready just before Christmas. They neglected it and let the time go by until November. I then said that I would not allow it to be built at that time, as we were daily having sleet, snow, rain and wind, so that I expected that the house would cost

[25] Hans Vos was the court messenger, or process server. He accompanied the officer of justice when arrests were to be made.

[26] *hoe vaeren u becslen all ende hcefl se bekeecken ende is weder week gegaen.* O'Callaghan translates: "How. are ye all here?" looked in, and returned back.

too much and that much food and drink would be consumed and the work not advanced. So I broke the contract, because they failed to carry out their promise.

It so happened that Maryn Andriaensen was at that time among us. He offered to sell me a house of oak wood, all ready to be raised *(alles richtens claer)*, the window and door casings all of oak. The Domine having conferred with both of us and we having concluded that Maryn's house would be a much better bargain than the other, I purchased the house from the latter for 350 guilders. Van der Doncq coming to hear of this, meanwhile got into company with the carpenters [and several other people] and told them that we had issued ordinances [5v] [forbidding the colonists to trade with the residents and that those whom this concerned should mutiny—that whoever had concocted this, had not concocted the ordinances only, and that I sought to steal the bread out of the mouths of the colonists too. Whereupon some were surprised that the officer should thus stir up the people. Others forthwith conspired to protest against me and to place their names in a circle under the protest, in order that it should not be known who had first signed it.] This protest having been drawn up, some were for driving me out of the colony as a rogue; others wished to knock me in the head. But I was not afraid. Van der Donck, for the sake of decency and to our satisfaction, promised [me and] the council to assist us in this, but when it came to the point he was to desert me and the council and to support them, whereof I shall also send you the affidavits of two persons who told me so with their own lips. So that your Honor will please consider for yourself what kind of an officer you have here, who would cause the ruination of the whole colony. He intends, next year, to return home. He has been to Catskill with some colonists to [inspect] that place and your Honor may be sure he intends to look for freighters to plant a colony there. Burger Jorissen, the smith, who heretofore has been in your Honor's colony, will live there also. He[27] has let his farm to Brant Pelen for [200] guilders a year, on which Brant Pelen intends to settle his son-in-law.[28] This will not happen with my consent.

Concerning the bark, of which I wrote to your Honor that I intended to have her upper works raised, I am advised against that, as she would thereby become too crank, while on account of her width she is very suitable for the transportation of cattle, so that I can use her to good advantage in the colony. I have therefore bought another, for 1100 guilders, which is a very tidy bark, with bran-new sails and well equipped with anchors and rigging. She can carry at sea [7 *lasts]* and on inland waters 8 *lasts.*[29] This spring she has been to the north and there traded a good deal of seawan. She is now lying in the South [River] to trade. I have spoken with Cornells Leendersen[30] and Maurits Jansen van Broeck-huysen, who returned from that quarter over two days ago. They told me that she would do a good business, as neither the Company nor the Swedes had any trading goods and there were still 700 to 800 beavers

[27] Meaning Adriaen van der Donck.

[28] *Swaeggr;* referring apparently to Claes Jansen Calff. who married one of Brant Peelen's daughters.

[29] One *last* of grain equals 82.5 bushels.

[30] He was a resident of Manhattan, the owner of a yacht and a partner of Govert Loockermans.

lying ready there, waiting for seawan or other goods, with which our bark, which Cornelis Leendersen spoke in the mouth of the river, is well provided, so that I hope that she will make a good profit. As soon as she returns, I shall, if I can manage it, send her with a cargo of wheat meal to Virginia, to see if it can be traded there for tobacco. I shall then also have inquiry made as to the kind of goods that are in demand there and advise your Honor of it.

[6] [The honorable patroon is much surprised that in the inventory no mention is made of sheep or hogs. This will inform him that the farmers have frequently been spoken to. They say that the hogs stray into the woods. We ourselves do not know how many pigs we have. We were obliged to give a number [of them] to other freemen, which were forwarded on payment, but your Honor must know that many mishaps have occurred to these.]

As to the sheep, which Maurits Jansen was appointed to count, they were counted accurately. A part of them were destroyed by wolves. There has been a reasonable increase; but the year after they died like rats. At present there are, young and old, about 15 or 16 sheep in the colony.

Further, may it please your Honor to know that between [the farm of] Broer Cornelis and the Vlackte there are still three islands—one of which, lying opposite the Vlackte, is about 20 to 25 *morgens* (40 to 50 acres) in extent—which have not been purchased from the owners. I have had a part of this island opposite the Vlackte plowed and am letting it lie fallow, in order to be sowed next year with wheat, for on the Vlackte I could this year get but 16 or 17 *morgens* under the plow, as there was so much clearing to be done. And as I did not wish to waste the time of the farmhands to do this clearing, which can always be done at a convenient season, when they have more time than at present, I have begun on the aforesaid island. But I should like this coming fall, if it please God, to have 30 *morgens* sowed with winter wheat, so that I shall be obliged to purchase the said islands from the Indians, although they will be reluctant to part with them. (I hope that your Honor will not) take it (ill),[31] for one is obliged to give the Indians as little cause for complaint as possible, to prevent them from rising up almost immediately.

Further, I have lately, with Lebatie and Jacob Jansen van Amsterdam, been on horseback to the Maquaes country, where three Frenchmen were prisoners—one of whom was a Jesuit, a very learned scholar—who had been very cruelly treated by the cutting off of the finger and thumb.[32] I carried presents there and proposed that we should keep on good terms as neighbors and that they should do no injury either to the colonists or to their cattle, which all the Indians, so far as three castles *(tot drie Caslelen toe),* thankfully accepted. We were entertained right well, in all friendship. We were obliged to halt fully a quarter of an hour before

[31] The words in parentheses are cancelled in the original.

[32] *alwaer drie fransen gevangen waeren, waeronder een Jesuit was dewelcke een seer treffelyck geleert is, de-welcke seer getracteert waeren, met affsnyden, so van vinqer als van duym.* O'Callaghan translates: "where three Frenchmen were prisoners; one of whom was a Jesuit, a very learned scholar, who was very cruelly treated, his linger and thumb being cut off," but the plural form *waeren* shows that all three of the prisoners were treated the same way. The Jesuit was Father Isaac Jogues, who shortly after visited the pa-troon's colony.

each castle, in order that the Indians might [6v] [salute us by the firing of muskets. There was also great joy among them because I had come. Indians were immediately sent out to hunt, who brought us in excellent turkeys. Then, I thoroughly inspected their castles and invited all the chiefs of the three castles to assemble together and proposed to them to release the French prisoners. But there was no appearance of this, which they refused with good reason. Said they: "We shall manifest toward you every friendship that is in our power, but on this subject we wish to be silent. Besides you well know] how they treat our people who [fall into their hands]." Had we delayed [reaching there] three or four days longer, they would have been burnt. I [offered them] for the ransom of the Frenchmen about [600 guilders] in goods, to which the entire colony would contribute, but they would in no wise accept them. However, we succeeded to this extent that they promised not to kill them, but to take them back to their country. The French captives ran screaming after us and begged us to do all that was in our power to release them out of the hands of the barbarians. But seeing that there was no chance of this, I departed. They gave me an escort of 10 or 12 men, who conducted us back home. Hardly half a day's journey from the colony, on the Maquaes kill, there lies the most beautiful land that eye may wish to see, full a day's journey long and mostly in one unbroken piece.[33] It is impossible to reach it by boat, on account of the strong current which prevails there and on the other hand on account of the shallowness of the water, but I think that it may be possible to reach it with wagons. Two of the Frenchmen, of whom the Jesuit was one, came to my house last May. They said they hoped that now there might be a chance to procure their release. As soon as the Indians return from hunting, an effort will be made to obtain their freedom. At the first opportunity I shall send your Honor the journal of my journey.[34]

I have purchased from Jan Machielsen, at the mill kill, for fl.6oo, a house and a large sweat-house,[35] which some time ago he purchased from Sander Leendersen, but to which he afterwards took a dislike. I shall pay for it mostly in credits against his account. As a passable barn stands near it, it may make a good farm. In the same way, as there is a good barn near the house of Cornelis Tuenissen,[36] on the Fifth kill, a good farm may be established there.

Cornelis Tuenissen goes over also. He has handed in his complete account, both debit and credit. In his credit account there is an item of 20 logs, which must be charged to the yacht. They were sold again at the Manhatans for 100 guilders. There is also another item of 100 logs, which I delivered to the Company for the freight of two sloops. [7] Each sloop's voyage lasted six weeks, which should have greatly swelled the freight.]

[Of the 30,000 brick which your Honor sent over last year by the *Houttuyn*,[37] I have not received above 10,000, as I am told by my skipper

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[33] *dat schoonste landt dal men met oogen besien mach, wel een dach reysens lang ende meest aen malcanderen.*

[34] This journal has unfortunately not been preserved.

[35] *Zwecthuys;* a building in which hides or skins are depilated.

[36] Cornelis Teunissen van Meerkerck, who arrived in the colony in 1633. *Van Rensselaer B&ivier Mss.*, p. 808.

[37] Domine Megapolensis came over on this ship.

Louwerens and others. The skipper of the *Houttuyn* kept them for ballast. Your Honor will be pleased not to send any more brick, for we can purchase them cheaper at the north than those which your Honor sent and they are as large again.] The 4,000 [tiles which your Honor sent] are not worth the freight, [for they crumble away like sand.] I have not had from these more than 10 to 12 hundred good [tiles. The rest are good for nothing.] The broker who [purchased] the tiles for your Honor has grossly cheated you.

I am at present betrothed to the [widow of] the late Mr. Jonas Bronck.[38] May the good Lord bless me in my undertaking and be pleased to grant that it may redound to His honor and to our salvation. Amen.

I hope to send your Honor the accounts by the next opportunity and then, some time next year, if your Honor should be pleased to consent, I intend, as soon as I shall have received your Honor's answer, to go over [to Holland] to request of your Honor a good lease of a farm, with a view of settling there and, if the Lord spare my life, keeping my residence in your Honor's colony for a good many years to come. If your Honor should be pleased to allow me to do this, as I hope, I most humbly request that it may please your Honor to grant my future wife leave to reside until my return in your Honor's house, with Anthony de Hooges. I think your Honor will not suffer any loss thereby, for she is a good housekeeper, as I trust your Honor will learn from others. I should not like to take her with me going and coming back, for one is exposed to many perils of the sea.

Neither I nor the Company have had any trade this year. I believe that the residents have shipped fully 3,000 to 4,000 skins from above. There has never before been such a big trade as this year and it would be very profitable if your Honor could bring about that the residents by higher authority were forbidden from coming into the colony to trade. Otherwise, your Honor will never be able to make any profit.

Ending herewith, I beg your Honor, if I have taken any liberty in advising you, to be pleased to take it in good part. With hearty greetings to your Honor and your Honor's wife and children from myself and my future wife, I commend you to the grace of God.

Your most humble and dutiful servant, ARENT VAN CURLER [Pages 7v and 8 blank; 8v Endorsed:]

Copy of the Letter sent to Patria in the yacht *Prins Maurits*, Gerrit Vastrick, supercargo. No. 14

Source: Van Laer, A.J.F. "Arent van Curler and His Historic Letter to the Patroon. The Dutch Settlers Society of Albany Yearbook 3:18-29 (1927-28).

[38] *Ick stae J egenwoordich onder trouw met de w[eduwe van] Zal'. Sr Jonas Bronck;* meaning that the registration of his intended marriage had taken place. Van Curler evidently married in a few days, for on June 25, 1643, he leased to Thomas Spicer the farm of Jonas Bronck, deceased, as if he had then acquired an interest in the farm by virtue of his marriage to Bronck's widow. Her name was Anthonia Slach-boom, familiarly referred to as Teuntje Jeuriaens. See *New York Colonial Mss.*, 2:54, 62.