

The Proprietary government would probably have expired quietly by the return of Eden to England, but for a slight but disturbing incident. A certain Alexander Ross who had been granted a passport to visit (under color of collecting a debt) Lord Dunmore, then on board a British cruiser in the Bay, was arrested in Virginia on his return, and on his person were found letters to the Governor from Lord George Germain, Secretary of State. Copies of these letters were sent to the Council of Safety, who deputed a committee to visit Eden and ask his parole that he would not leave the Province until after the meeting of the Convention. He declined to give any such parole; but in consideration of the courtesy with which he was uniformly treated, he voluntarily assured them that it was his intention to remain until the Convention met; and this assurance was accepted as satisfactory.

But Gen. Charles Lee, commanding the Continental forces in Virginia, on seeing the letters, took a sudden fright, and wrote, not, as he should have done, to the Council of Safety, but to Saml. Purviance, chairman of the Baltimore Committee, sending copies of the letters, and urging him to arrest Eden immediately in his (Lee's) name. Purviance, an ardent patriot, but somewhat hot-headed, sent the copies to Hancock, President of the Congress, and with them an unsigned letter of his own, in which he charged the Council with timorousness and inactivity, and intimated that he would send on his own responsibility a secret expedition to Annapolis to seize the Governor's person. This letter, contrary to the writer's expectation, was read in Congress, and the Maryland deputies, highly indignant, at once notified the Council of Safety.

Congress, too prone, even at that early date, to magnify its powers, passed resolutions that the Council be earnestly requested to seize the person of Eden; and Hancock, in transmitting them, remarked that Congress relied on their zeal and diligence in executing them. The Council was too polite to remind Congress that it was not a Congressional Committee, but briefly replied that they were aware of all the facts, and had taken proper measures.

Purviance, however, determined to take vigorous action on his own account, and without his colleagues' authority ordered a party to go with speed and secrecy to Annapolis, arrest Eden and bring him to Baltimore. News of this plot leaked out, and Purviance was first censured by the Baltimore Committee, then cited before the Council, who examined and reprimanded him, and placed him under bond to appear before the Convention, when he was reprimanded again. They also, indirectly, gave Lee to understand what they thought of his meddling in a Province where he had no authority; and he apologised for his excess of zeal.

Eden left the Province on June 24, and went on board the frigate *Fowey*, the Council accompanying him to the barge, with every mark of respect; and thus the last phantom of proprietary government vanished.

Several of the colonies were eager that the Congress should take the decisive step of declaring independence; but the deputies from Mary-