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TERMS.
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Substance of the Speech of Mr. Leigh, at the Dinner given to him at Petersburg on the 15th of October.

The Toast drunk to Mr. Leigh was this—
"Benjamin Watkins Leigh—The fearless, able and eloquent defender of the Constitution. We advance the patriot, honor the statesman, respect and love the man."

It was received by the company with most enthusiastic and long continued cheers; the band struck up the tune of *Judd Lang Syne*; and when all was at length hushed into profound silence.
Mr. Leigh rose and said.—There were some feelings, and those the best that could warm the heart of man, which could be far more easily understood than expressed. And such were the feelings, which the vivid associations, suggested by the place itself in which he was now standing, and yet more by the company that surrounded him, excited in his bosom. On this very spot he had passed many a sportive hour, and partaken in many a civic festival, in the days of his youth and early manhood,—with friends of whom he saw many present, and whose presence reminded him of many now no more,—in times, when political opposition never abated personal good will, interrupted private friendship, or disturbed social intercourse; in times, when those who maintained their own opinions with most zeal, yet respected the opinions of others, and gave them credit for integrity and sincerity; when, if heats arose in the unrestrained freedom of discussion, every man dismissed all angry feeling from his breast, before he laid his head upon his pillow, and met his opponent next morning with an open countenance, on which more than usual kindness was beaming, anxious to obliterate the memory of the altercation by the marked cordiality of his manner. The thought of those times, and of those scenes, he said, came over his mind now, "like the memory of joys, that are past, pleasant, and mournful to the soul." For that healthful state of public feeling,—those happy times,—had gone by; perhaps, never more to recur, in his day. The mad and maddening fury of party strife, that was now raging through the land, if it should endure yet a little longer, and be aggravated to a single degree more of intensity, would, he much feared, destroy all the charities, and even the decencies, of social life.

He said, he had been sent to the Senate of the United States, not only without any solicitation on his part, but against his wishes, and indeed in spite of his earnest deprecation; he had been compelled into the public service by a moral force, which no man could have resisted, without incurring the imputation of a cold unconcern for the vital interests of his country, and subjecting himself to the suspicion of the basest recreancy. And, immediately afterwards, he saw himself charged with the most artful intrigue; intrigue to induce the Legislature to adopt such a course of proceedings as should compel his predecessor to resign, and then to procure his own election to the vacant place! Those who imputed such intrigues to him—if they thought what they said—must have supposed him possessed either of the gift of prophecy or of the unreserved confidence of his predecessor, for, otherwise, no man could have foreseen, that the resolutions of the Legislature would induce him to resign his seat. But, he said, he might safely vouch every member of the Legislature; friend or foe, to acquit him of the charge of intrigue. That was not, never had been, never would be, his way of working. He had, in truth, little or no conversation with his most intimate personal friends in the Legislature, on the subject of its proceedings; and there were gentlemen now present (he alluded, particularly, to Mr. Book of Amelia and Mr. Johnson of Chesterfield) who could and would bear witness, that so far from having sought to be elected to the Senate, he had done all that any man could have done without in-

propriety, to avoid it. They who charged him with intrigues on that occasion, could only find evidence to justify the charge, in the consciousness of what they themselves would have been capable of, in the like circumstances.

He had been sent to the Senate, in the midst of the most arduous session, and in the most extraordinary conjuncture of affairs, ever known in our history. New to the councils of the federal government—new to the scene in which he was called to bear a part—unacquainted with the actors in the great eventful drama, and yet more unknown to them; if he had possessed tenfold the powers he ever pretended to, and the utmost weight of personal character that ever fell to the lot of man, it would not have been much that he could, under such circumstances, have accomplished. As things stood, it was little, very little indeed, that he had done, or rather essayed—but what he could or thought he could, that he had endeavored to do, diligently, faithfully, fearlessly, without the least regard to consequences affecting himself personally. His principal effort had been to give the public, and especially his own constituents, a glimpse of the prospect before them. A distrust of his political sagacity (reasonable enough, if no attention were paid to the state of facts, and of public opinion out of Virginia) or the wilfulness of party delusion, had, in a measure, frustrated his purpose. If he had been told, that he had disappointed the too partial expectations of his friends, he should have felt and acquiesced in the justice of his censure. But, he said, to his surprise, though not at all to his dismay, his name had been, for the last eight months, the theme of eulogium, unmeasured, and he would add to some of it, vile and silly abuse. The malignant spirit of party had been pouring his exhaustless phials of wrath upon his head; and calumny, with her quiver of poisoned arrows, had almost deafened him by the constant twanging of her bow, though he found in his own conscience an impenetrable shield against her shafts. The history of his life had been ransacked, to find topics of reproach; and it was really wonderful that a history so barren of political incident, should have been found capable of bearing such masses of commentary. In looking back, as he had been in the habit of doing often, upon his past conduct and opinions, he had been conscious of many mistakes, which reflection and experience required him to correct, many weaknesses to be ashamed of, and faults to repent; nor did he envy the man, who was incapable of making similar discoveries with respect to himself. But, in these modern memoirs of his life and character—memoirs written to serve for party history—written too, by persons professing an intimate knowledge of him—some, indeed, professing to be his personal friends, in order to give the semblance of candor to their accounts; in these memoirs, there were such aggravations of his errors and faults, such misrepresentations, distortions and false colourings of facts, and sometimes, he might say, such absurd inventions, that he could not recognize his political identity in their descriptions. There were many persons now here present, who had known him longest and best; who had had the best opportunities of understanding his character, his weaknesses, his failings,—if you please, his faults; persons, to whom he had, at times, stood in political opposition; he trusted—judging from their treatment of him even in the height of that opposition—that they had found in him some redeeming qualities—and he was mistaken if they had been able to discover his likeness in the portraits of him that had recently been exhibited. He was, however, happy to find, that as yet no moral guilt had been imputed to his conduct in private life—and with that remarkable exemption he ought, perhaps, to be content. But, he said, he was confident, that nothing he had ever done—nothing, certainly, which he had done, or was expected to do, in the Senate—had made him the object of so much and such virulent abuse as had lately been heaped upon him. Until lately, indeed, he had not imagined, that he could be thought of importance enough to excite such bitter and deadly hostility in any party; and it only served to convince him, that he was honored with an especial share of Gen. Jackson's displeasure—and that the nomination of him for the Presidency, had

excited the jealousy of the friends of Mr. Van Buren.

He said, that in the course of his short service in the Senate, he had abstained from personal reflections on the President. He had no personal enmity towards the man, to tempt him to the indulgence of such reflections. A free and fearless examination of his official measures and conduct, of his dangerous and hitherto unheard of pretensions to power, of the monarchical prerogatives he had claimed and exercised, belonged to his own place in the public councils, he would have been recreant and contemptible, if he had avoided the part he took. But he could say, with conscious truth and sincerity, that he had been careful not to impugn, or even to inquire into, the President's motives; he had been mindful of the dignity of the Senate, mindful of the courtesy due to the friends of the administration there, mindful of the respect due to the office of chief magistrate, and, above all, to the people who elevated him to it. The judicious and impartial spectator of the passing scenes,—the historian who should write the account of these times when all false glosses have been worn off,—positively which alone could award the just measure of praise or blame,—would find the severest censures of the personal character of the President, in the language and conduct of some of those who call themselves his friends. There were men, calling themselves his friends—such friends as it had often been the curse of men in power to have—who were daily manifesting their opinion of his heart and understanding; and such an opinion as the bitterest of his enemies might scruple to express.—They manifested it, he said, in the means they adopt to conciliate or to preserve his favour—they manifested it, in the gross and fulsome adulation with which they always approach him—such adulation, indeed, as might disgust an eastern despot—yet neither of them had ever hinted his purpose to him; and he always believed that they refrained from doing so, because they thought they had a right to act, in such a case, without consulting his wishes, and because they apprehended they would find in his remonstrances an obstacle to the execution of their design. Therefore, immediately and ever since,—whenever any opportunity had been presented to him to speak upon the subject, without incurring the ridicule of affecting to disclaim an honor which he had not the least reason to hope,—in his correspondence with those who were intent on making the nomination,—in conversation with every person who alluded to it, whether a common acquaintance or confidential friend,—he had, uniformly and unequivocally, renounced all pretensions, and stated, in the strongest terms, the utter hopelessness of the proposed nomination. It was, however, formally made in a few counties in Virginia. He was not deceived by those appearances of public favor,—no, not for a moment. He had long been a close observer of the wayward workings of party spirit,—and he knew well, that so soon as the popularity of General Jackson should be understood to be arrayed against him, many of those who had been among the most earnest in advocating his pretensions, would make a merit of abandoning him. He had not, indeed, anticipated, that any of them would also denounce him,—that any of those who had united in the proposal to elevate him so far above his deserts, and thereby made him an object of jealousy, suspicion and malevolence, would join the partisans of Mr. Van Buren in their hue and cry,—that any of them would be found to take a chance in the shouting match themselves, where he was the target to be shot at, and a share of Jackson's favour the prize to be shot for. And never,—never surely, till these times, could such a thing have taken place in Virginia! He said, he thought he understood his own situation and feelings, perfectly. He was well aware of his long continued obscurity,—services in the national councils, he could boast literally none,—he understood the nature of the presidential office, the arduous and continually increasing difficulties that beset the incumbent,—he knew, that the habits, the pursuits, and the studies of his life, had not instituted his mind in the duties of a statesman at the head of affairs,—he knew, far better than any other man could know, his unfitness for such a station. And this was the language he had constantly held,—let

sentment, to invent or circulate the vilest calumnies against them, to load them with popular odium, and to offer them as victims to appease his wrath—and, especially, those who persecute, with peculiar rancour, men who entertain the same opinions of the great man they would propitiate, which they themselves have entertained and maintained, and upon whom they have recently bestowed their voluntary praises,—as if they thought the more unblemished the victim, the fitter for the altar: such persons shew by their deeds, much more plainly than they could by words, that, in their opinion, revenge and hate are the master passions of his soul who can be propitiated by such sacrifice. In these and many other respects, there never was a man, who could say with more reason and propriety than General Jackson,—Save me from my friends; I can take care of my enemies myself.

Recurring to the remark he had made, that the nomination of him for the Presidency had excited the jealousy of the partisans of Mr. Van Buren,—Mr. L. said, the design of making such a nomination had originated while he was in South Carolina, where his mind and his heart were occupied with far different thoughts from any schemes of personal ambition—and strange, as it might seem, it was yet true, that when the design was first mentioned to him, he had not the least idea that it was seriously entertained. The first public announcement of it was made at the Chesterfield election, in April, 1833, by a gentleman now present (William R. Johnson) and it was repeated not long afterwards, by two other gentlemen, who had since, to the irreparable loss of their friends, and of their country, gone to the grave (John Randolph and Thomas T. Boulton). All of them had known him long and intimately, and understood perfectly his character, his temper, his feelings, his situation,—yet neither of them had ever hinted his purpose to him; and he always believed that they refrained from doing so, because they thought they had a right to act, in such a case, without consulting his wishes, and because they apprehended they would find in his remonstrances an obstacle to the execution of their design. Therefore, immediately and ever since,—whenever any opportunity had been presented to him to speak upon the subject, without incurring the ridicule of affecting to disclaim an honor which he had not the least reason to hope,—in his correspondence with those who were intent on making the nomination,—in conversation with every person who alluded to it, whether a common acquaintance or confidential friend,—he had, uniformly and unequivocally, renounced all pretensions, and stated, in the strongest terms, the utter hopelessness of the proposed nomination. It was, however, formally made in a few counties in Virginia. He was not deceived by those appearances of public favor,—no, not for a moment. He had long been a close observer of the wayward workings of party spirit,—and he knew well, that so soon as the popularity of General Jackson should be understood to be arrayed against him, many of those who had been among the most earnest in advocating his pretensions, would make a merit of abandoning him. He had not, indeed, anticipated, that any of them would also denounce him,—that any of those who had united in the proposal to elevate him so far above his deserts, and thereby made him an object of jealousy, suspicion and malevolence, would join the partisans of Mr. Van Buren in their hue and cry,—that any of them would be found to take a chance in the shouting match themselves, where he was the target to be shot at, and a share of Jackson's favour the prize to be shot for. And never,—never surely, till these times, could such a thing have taken place in Virginia! He said, he thought he understood his own situation and feelings, perfectly. He was well aware of his long continued obscurity,—services in the national councils, he could boast literally none,—he understood the nature of the presidential office, the arduous and continually increasing difficulties that beset the incumbent,—he knew, that the habits, the pursuits, and the studies of his life, had not instituted his mind in the duties of a statesman at the head of affairs,—he knew, far better than any other man could know, his unfitness for such a station. And this was the language he had constantly held,—let

his most intimate confidential friends be put to the question, and torture could not extort from them a word to contradict him. He should take this opportunity to say publicly,—not for the purpose of deprecating the enmity of Jackson—Van Burenism (as the company would presently see) nor for his own sake, but for the sake of the public,—that he did not now entertain, and never had entertained, the least hope of the presidency or the least desire of that high dignity. Whether if he could be inspired with such a hope, that hope would kindle his ambition, he really did not pretend to know himself well enough to say, with positive certainty, but he conscientiously believed, that if he could reach the presidency by taking a single step towards it, far from taking that step, he should recoil from it. He did not say this, in the hope that the partisans of Mr. Van Buren would believe him.—He doubted whether they were capable of conceiving the possibility of such a state of feeling. There were men, very knowing and penetrating in their own conceit, whom of all mankind it was most easy to deceive,—one had only to tell them the truth. They interpreted men's actions and words after the method of interpreting dreams; namely, by contraries. They especially insisted on the application of that rule of interpretation to his actions and words. He had been well informed, that his disclaimer of all pretensions of fitness for the presidency, had been imputed to vanity; and his declaration of reluctance to be put in competition for the office, had been considered as proof of an insatiable ambition of it. They thought him so blind as not to see, that the course he had pursued, and was pursuing, led not towards the presidency, but directly from it,—they thought, that if he practised none of the fraudulent artifices of ambition, it was because he was such a simpleton that he did not know how, not because he knew, contemned and detested them, as every man of honor ought and did,—and above all, they thought it evidence of the height of presumption in him, that others had thought him worthy to succeed such a man as Gen. Jackson, and had presumed to name him as a competitor of such a man, forsooth! as Mr. Van Buren.

The abuse they were heaping upon him, might, he said, detract from his reputation in the eyes of the world—such abuse had tarnished the fame of better men—but he trusted it could never subdue his spirit,—or, what his enemies were pleased to call, "his pride,"—"his passions," still burning, as they said, with as intense a heat as in his youthful days. Yes, indeed—the inborn pride of a free man—the passion for a government of laws—the detestation of a government of will—the love of civil liberty and public virtue—the hatred of corruption—were yet burning in his bosom; and he trusted the last of power or of distinction would never smother them. Praise might inflate Mr. Van Buren's importance; but, if the elevation were not in his sentiments and character no praise could elevate his soul to the dignity of the Presidential office,—raise him above the influence of factions, and inspire him with a just sense of the duties which a President of the United States owed to this great nation. It was not, certainly, out of deference for the superior merits of that gentleman, that Mr. L. was anxious to decline the competition. Mr. Van Buren's partisans,—paying no regard to decency, much more delicacy, themselves,—and exacting none from their leader,—had counted, he well knew, upon the delicacy of the situation in which others had placed him without his consent, and were ready to raise the cry, that delicacy ought to put a gag upon his tongue, and a fetter upon his opposition to their favorite. He would not be so gagged and fettered—and he took this occasion to avow his determined opposition to Mr. Van Buren's pretensions to the presidency, and his opinion, that the election of him to the office, would be the last aggravation of political evil, that could, under the present form of our government, befall the country.

What services, he asked, had that gentleman ever rendered to the nation—he did not ask, what services he had rendered to any faction—that should entitle him to the highest reward the nation could bestow? What abilities had he ever displayed, that fitted him for the chief magistracy? Upon what foundation rested his claim to the general confidence of the Union, that should place him at the head of affairs? And, especially, what were the

merits on which he rested his hopes of the suffrages of the Southern States?—He suggested these inquiries, and he would suggest too, the topics which the answers to them would involve. Let Mr. Van Buren's partisans commit themselves, if they dared, without waiting for a Baltimore Convention—let them enter at once into the detail—let them tax their memory, let them tax their inventiveness, to give us the most plausible account possible of his public services. As to his political history before he came to the Senate of the United States, Mr. L. said, he never had been able to understand the party politics of New York, and he could say nothing about him, of his own knowledge; he only knew, that he had been charged with having been, at different times, in league with every party, and at all times remarkable for his fidelity—to himself, which, included, of course, fidelity to the majority for the time being. What did he, in the Senate? Would his friends refer to the support, the zealous support, which he gave, there, to the American System in both its branches, and in its utmost extremes? He voted for the appropriation of money for internal improvement—even for the erection of toll gates on the Cumberland road—so, at least, Mr. L. had been informed, and believed, and he voted for the tariff of 1828. He contributed to turn out a singularly unpopular administration, and to the election of Gen. Jackson to the presidency—he contributed his efforts—for these were numbers equally active and more efficient some of whom his and the president's friends were now exhibiting themselves in reviving. Mr. Van Buren had his reward.—He was appointed to the office of Secretary of State. And the only remarkable achievements that distinguished his administration of that department, that Mr. L. remembered (others might add to the list, if they could) were,—that he advised the president (for it must have been his advice,—it belonged to his place) to appoint a diplomatic agent to Turkey to negotiate a treaty, during the Session of the Senate, without asking its consent and advice as to the mission of the agent, directly contrary to his own declared opinion that such a proceeding was unconstitutional, in the famous debate on the Panama mission, on which occasion, Mr. Adams had asserted such a power, but abstained from the exercise of it—and 2, that he deliberately instructed our minister at London to exhibit our party contest, recently terminated by the election of Gen. Jackson, to the British ministry, as a motive to induce them to favor us in the then pending negotiation. The first was a point of constitutional law, which this was no place to discuss; he might refer Mr. Van Buren's friends to his own speech on the subject. But, as to the second, the good sense, the good feeling of every American citizen, could decide without difficulty, and almost without thought. The statesman who could wilfully and deliberately expose to a foreign government, our domestic quarrels, our party contests, and as it were the weak side of our institutions, no matter for what purpose, must, in his opinion, be wanting in the dignity, the magnanimity, the national pride, the generosity, that became the American citizen, much more the high officer of State. Mr. Van Buren's good nature, if not his good sense and patriotism, should have saved him from that exhibition of party feeling. Mr. L. by no means thought mean of his capacity. His personal acquaintance with him was too slight, to enable him to judge of him from his own observation,—but he had never been able to discover, in any thing that had been given to the world—as what he said or done, that Mr. Van Buren possessed the qualities of a great and wise statesman, a liberal, comprehensive, long and wide reaching, profoundly sagacious mind; and those commanding talents, and yet more commanding virtues, which might control faction and exempt him from the necessity of following, in order to have the appearance of leading,—and it had appeared to him, that Mr. Van Buren was deficient in that which every man of long conversant in politics ought to possess, since it was in every man's power to acquire—general political knowledge. It had rarely, if ever happened, that he who acquired the reputation of cunning, deserved the fame of wisdom. As served for those talents which were so generally imputed to Mr. Van Buren—those talents that had acquired for