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## Domestic.

### LETTER OF THE SECRETARY OF WAR.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE BALTIMORE PATRIOT.

It may be due to myself and is certainly due to others, that the reasons under which I retired from the direction of the War Department, at a juncture so critical as the present, should be fully and promptly known to the public. These reasons will be found in the following brief exposition of facts.

On the evening of the 29th ultimo, the President called at my lodgings, and stated that a case of much delicacy had occurred; that a high degree of excitement had been raised among the militia of the District; that he was himself an object of their suspicions and menaces; that an officer of that corps had given him notice, that they would no longer obey any order coming through me as Secretary of War; and that in the urgency of the case, it might be prudent so far to yield to the impulse, as to permit some other person to exercise my functions in relation to the defence of the District.

To this statement and proposition, I answered substantially as follows—that I was aware of the excitement to which he alluded, that I knew its source and had marked its progress; that the present was not a moment to examine its more occult causes, objects and agents; that it ostensibly rested on charges known to himself to be false, that it was not for me to determine how far the supposed urgency of the case made it proper for him to yield to an impulse so vile and profligate—so injurious to truth and so destructive of order; but that for myself, there was no choice; that I could never surrender a part of my legitimate authority, for the preservation of the rest—that I must exercise it wholly, or not at all—that I came into office, with objects exclusively public; and that to accommodate my principles or my conduct to the humors of a village mob, stimulated by faction and led by folly, was not the way to promote these, and that if his decision was taken in conformity to the suggestion he had made, I entreated him to accept my resignation. This he declined doing. It was an extent, he was pleased to say, to which he meant not to go; that he knew the excitement was limited, as well with regard to time as to place; that he was now, and had always been, fully sensible of the general zeal, diligence and talent, which I had put into the discharge of my duty, and that it would give him pleasure, were I to take time to consider his proposition. I renewed the assurance of my great personal respect, and my readiness to conform to his wishes on all proper occasions.

I remarked, that whatever zeal, diligence and talent I possessed, had been employed freely but firmly and according to my best views of the public good, and that as long as they were left to be so exerted, they were at the service of my country—but that the moment they were made to bow to military usurpation or political faction, there should be an end of their public exercise. We now parted, with an understanding that I should leave Washington the following morning.

It has been since stated to me as a fact (to which I give the most reluctant belief) that on the morning of the 29th, and before my arrival in the city, a committee of the inhabitants of Georgetown, of whom Alexander C. Hanson, editor of the Federal Republican, was one, had waited on the President, by deputation, and had obtained from him a promise, that I should no longer direct the military defences of the District. On this fact, all commentary is unnecessary.

It but remains to exhibit and to answer, the several charges raised against me and which form the groundwork of that excitement, to which the President has deemed it prudent to sacrifice his authority, in declining to support mine. They are as follows, viz.

1st. That (from ill-will to the District of Columbia, and a design to remove the seat of government,) I gave orders for the retreat of the army, in the affair of the 24th ult. under circumstances not making retreat necessary or proper.

This charge has not for its support the shadow of truth. The commanding general will do me the justice to say, that I gave him no such order, and that he was and is under the impression, that the retreat was made earlier than I believed it to be proper. To the President I appeal, whether I did not point out the disorder and retreat of a part of the first line, soon after the action began, and stigmatise it as base and infamous.

2d. That, in despite of the remonstrances of Gen. Winder, and by the interposition of my authority, I had prevented him from defending the Capital.

This charge contains in it a total perversion of the truth. When the head of the retiring column reached the Capitol, it was halted for a moment. Gen. Winder here took occasion to state to Mr. Monroe and myself, that he was not in condition to maintain another conflict and that his force was broken down by fatigue and dispersion. Under this representation, we

united in opinion, that he should proceed to occupy the heights of Georgetown.

3d. That I had withdrawn the covering party from the rear of fort Washington, and had ordered captain Dyson to blow up the fort without firing a gun.

This charge is utterly devoid of truth. The covering party was withdrawn by an order from general Winder, and captain Dyson's official report shews, that the orders under which he acted, were derived from the same source, though, no doubt, mistaken or misrepresented. 4th. That by my order, the navy yard had been burned. This like it's predecessors, is a positive falsehood.

Perceiving that no order was taken for apprising Commodore Tingley of the retreat of the army, I sent Major Bell to communicate the fact and to say, that the Navy Yard could no longer be covered. The commodore was of course left to follow the suggestions of his own mind, or to obey the orders, if orders had been given, of the Navy Department.

5th. And lastly, that means had not been taken to collect a force sufficient for the occasion. As the subject of this charge may very soon become one of congressional enquiry, I shall at present make but a few remarks:

1st. That no means within reach of the War Department had been omitted or withheld—that a separate military district, embracing the seat of government, had been created; that an officer of high rank and character had been placed in charge of it: that to him was given full authority to call for supplies and for a militia force of fifteen thousand men; that to this force was added the 36th regt. of the line, a battalion of the 39th, detachments of the 12th, of the artillery, and of the dragoons, the marine corps, and the crews of the flotilla, under the special command of commodore Barney—making a total of 16,300 men.

Gen. Winder's official report of the engagement of the 24th ult. shews, how much of this force had been assembled, and the causes why a greater portion of it had not been got together. These will be found to have been altogether extraneous from the Government, and entirely beyond its control: and

2d. That from what is now known of the enemy's force, of the loss he sustained in the enterprise, of the marks of panic under which he retreated &c. &c. it is obvious, that if all the troops assembled at Bladensburg, had been faithful to themselves and to their country, the enemy would have been beaten, and the Capital saved.

JOHN ARMSTRONG.

Baltimore, 2d September, 1814.

### TO THE PUBLIC.

City of Washington, 30th Aug. 1814.

Hearing of several misrepresentations, I think it my duty to state to you in as concise a manner as the various circumstances will permit, my conduct in the late transactions in this City.

After securing all the public papers committed to my care, and sending them to a place of perfect safety, (leaving my own property unattended to) I proceeded on the 23d inst. to the neighborhood of the army, and afterwards accompanied the hon. the Secretary of State, Colonel Monroe, with some other gentlemen in reconnoitering the country, whence we only returned at 12 o'clock at night. The next day I removed with my family in the retreating army from the City, and beheld in deep regret, that night, the tremendous conflagrations of our public buildings, &c. Hearing next morning, while at breakfast in Georgetown, that the British were preparing to burn the War office and the public buildings containing the models of the arts, I was desirous not only of saving an instrument that had cost me great labor, but of preserving if possible the building and all the models—I therefore left my breakfast and hastened forward, determining to request the first known democrat I should meet to accompany me, lest the malevolent should insinuate that I had in any manner held an improper communication with the invaders of the country—I met with Charles Carroll, Esq. one of the most respectable gentlemen in the District, I begged him to accompany me for the reasons given; he very politely attended me. We arrived at the very moment when the English Col. Jones and his men were proceeding to burn the War Office; Mr. Carroll had already accompanied the Mayor of Georgetown in a peace deputation and was therefore known to some of the officers; he informed Col. Jones that I had waited on him to request permission to take out of the Patent Office a musical instrument; the Colonel immediately replied, that it was not their intention to destroy any private property, I was perfectly at liberty to take it. After the War Office was burnt, I entreated Mr. Carroll to accompany me to the Patent Office, but he proceeded only to my own house and told me he must return. He did so; and I went to the residence of the Mayor to ask him to accompany me to the building, he was out of town; I next called on Mr. Nicholson, my model maker and messenger, and desired him to attend me; he did, and the British soldiers were then marching in two columns to burn the building. When we arrived there we found the Revd. Mr. Brown, Mr. Lyon and Mr. Hatfield near the Patent Office. Major Waters, who was then on guard and waiting the command of Colonel Jones, informed me that the private property might be taken out. I told him that there was nothing but private property of any consequence, and that any public property to which he objected might be burnt in the street, provided the build-

ing might be preserved, which contained hundreds of models of the arts, and that it would be impossible to remove them, and to burn what would be useful to all mankind, would be as barbarous as formerly to burn the Alexandrian Library, for which the Turks have been ever since condemned by all enlightened nations.

The Major desired me to go again with him to Col. Jones, who was attending some of his men engaged in destroying Mr. Gales' types and printing apparatus. I went to the Avenue and was kindly received by the Colonel; they took their men away and promised to spare the building. I then returned satisfied without seeing any other British officer, and went out of the district with my family. On Friday (26th) I returned to the city lest any inferior officer, not knowing of this promise, should set fire to the building; but I found the British were gone, except a few sick and wounded men and their attendants. Finding the Mayor not yet in the city, I as the only Justice of the Peace, appointed a guard at the President's House and Offices, another at the Capitol to prevent plunderers who were carrying off articles to the amount of thousands of dollars. \*When at the Capitol, I was informed that a dreadful scene of plunder was exhibited at the Navy Yard. I went and ordered the gates to be shut, and stopped every plunderer. While placing a guard there, Commodore Tingley arrived. I delivered every thing up to him; and in returning was told the English sick and wounded were in want, and had no provision. I visited them, and was informed by Sergeant Sinclair of the British 21st regt. who had the command of these men, that Dr. James Ewell had in the most humane manner attended them as a physician, and as far as he could, he had supplied them with necessaries. Major L'Enfant, with great humanity, besides being useful in some precautionary measures, desired I would have carts sent for some of our wounded men on the commons. I understood he had engaged one, and I desired he would send as many as he thought necessary, for which I would be answerable. [I have heard since they had been removed.] I then waited on Dr. James Ewell, to thank him in the name of the city for his goodness towards the distressed, who, being in our power, and especially in misery, were no longer enemies. He told me there was no provision for them of any kind. I appointed a Commissary, and ordered every thing that the Doctor thought requisite, for which I would be responsible. The Sergeant requested my protection for all his men. I told him they would be protected; and as I had seen several stragglers, and as our people would parole the streets in squads of six at least in every ward, and might meet some of them, it would be well to send a man with each of our patrols as a guard to challenge them, and thereby prevent our people from firing on them; and if any should be found to take them to the Sergeant, who would put them under guard for further orders. He promised to obey every order. I gave orders and he fulfilled them. Some stragglers, I understand, were taken up, and perfect order kept throughout the city.

After I had made all the arrangements, the Mayor arrived. I informed him of all I had done, and stated, that I then delivered over to him all the authority I had from the duty of office assumed. He, I believe, and my fellow-citizens, approved of my conduct. I returned late to my family in the country.

In the morning we returned to town, and heard the British ships attacking Fort Warburton. On the 28th, I learnt that the people being afraid of the landing of the British seamen, who they thought were immediately bound for the city, I had desired the Mayor to wait on the President, and request permission to send a deputation—not to enter into a capitulation of any kind, but to represent to the commander of the British squadron, that it was understood when their army destroyed the public buildings and property no other would be molested, and to request therefore they would not permit their sailors to land; but learning at the same time that the President had refused to hear of a deputation, and understanding that the people on all sides deprecated a mere shew of resistance; for it was supposed our men had not generally returned, and that the few who had returned were all dispersed, I rode immediately to the President, who was attended by the Secretary of State and the Attorney General. I represented the general feelings of the people on the above supposition, but was answered it would be dishonorable to send any deputation, and that we would defend the city to the very last: that our men had returned, and we should have sufficient force if called together, and I was desired to aid in rousing them to arms. I obeyed the call—returned, rode in all directions, and called to arms. I sent for the troops from Bladensburg, and urged them from various places. I went to the different quarters, and gave, as far as I could, every assistance in my power to fulfil the wishes of the government.

Respectfully,  
WILLIAM THORNTON.

\*Returning since to the City, I found the guards were not continued.

Copy of a letter from commodore Barney to the secretary of the navy, dated

Farm, at Elk Ridge, August 29th, 1814.

SIR—This is the first moment I have had in my power to make a report of the proceedings of the forces under my command since I had the honor of seeing you on Tuesday, the 23d inst. at the camp at the "old fields." On the afternoon of that day we were informed

that the enemy was advancing upon us. Our army was put into order of battle and our position taken; my forces were on the right flanked by the two battalions of the 36th and 39th regiments, where we remained some hours. The enemy did not, however, make his appearance. A little before sunset gen. Winder came to me and recommended that the heavy artillery should be withdrawn, with the exception of one 12 pounder to cover the retreat. We took up the line of march, and in the night entered Washington by the Eastern Branch bridge. I marched my men, &c. to the marine barracks, and took up quarters for the night. About 2 o'clock, gen. Winder came to my quarters, and we made some arrangements. In the morning I received a note from gen. Winder, and waited upon him. He requested me to take command and place my artillery to defend the passage of the bridge on the Eastern Branch, as the enemy was approaching the city in that direction.—I immediately put my guns in position, leaving the marines and the rest of my men at the barracks, to wait for further orders. I was in this situation when I had the honor to meet you with the president and heads of departments, when it was determined I should draw off my guns and men, and proceed towards Bladensburg, which was immediately put into execution. On our way I was informed the enemy was within a mile of Bladensburg: we hurried on, tho' the day was very hot, and my men much crippled from the severe marches we had experienced the preceding days. I preceded the men, and when I arrived at the line which separates the district from Maryland, the battle began. I sent an officer back to hasten on my men; they came up in a trot. We took our position on the rising ground, put the pieces in battery, posted the marines under capt. Miller, and flotilla men who were to act as infantry under their own officers, on my right, to support the pieces, and waited the approach of the enemy. During this period the engagement continued—the enemy advancing and our army retreating before them, apparently in much disorder. At length the enemy made his appearance on the main road in force and in front of my battery, and on seeing us made a halt; I reserved our fire; in a few minutes the enemy again advanced, when I ordered an 18 pounder to be fired, which completely cleared the road; shortly after, a second and a third attempt was made by the enemy to come forward, but all who made the attempt, were destroyed.—The enemy then crossed over into an open field and attempted to flank our right. He was there met by three 18 pounders, the Marines under Captain Miller, and my men acting as infantry, and again was totally cut up. By this time not a vestige of the American army remained, except a body of five or six hundred posted on the height on my right from whom I expected much support from their fine situation. The enemy from this period never appeared in force in front of us. He however pushed forward his sharpshooters, one of whom shot my horse under me, which fell dead between two of my guns. The enemy who had been kept in check by our fire for nearly an hour, now began to out-flank us on the right. Our guns were turned that way; he pushed up the hill about 2 or 300 men towards the corps of Americans stationed as above described, who to my great mortification made no resistance, giving a fire or two and retreating.

In this situation we had the whole army of the enemy to contend with; our ammunition was expended, and unfortunately the drivers of my ammunition waggons had gone off in the general panic. At this time I received a severe wound in my thigh. Captain Miller was wounded, Sailing-Master Warner killed, Acting Sailing-master Martin killed, and sailing master Martin wounded, but to the honor of my officers and men as fast as their companions and mess-mates fell at the guns, they were instantly replaced from those acting as infantry. Finding the enemy now completely in our rear and no means of defence, I gave orders to my officers and men to retire. Three of my officers assisted me to get off a short distance, but the great loss of blood occasioned such a weakness that I was compelled to lie down. I requested my officers to leave me, which they obstinately refused, but upon being ordered they obeyed; one only remained. In a short time I observed a British soldier & had him called, and directed him to seek an officer; in a few minutes an officer came, who, on learning who I was, brought Gen. Ross and Adm. Cockburn to me. These officers behaved to me with the most marked attention, respect and politeness, had a surgeon brought and my wound dressed immediately. After a few minutes conversation the General informed me (after paying me a handsome compliment) that I was paroled and at liberty to proceed to Washington or Bladensburg, as was also Mr. Huffington who had remained with me offering me every assistance in his power, giving order for a litter to be brought, in which I was carried to Bladensburg. Capt. Wainwright, first Captain to Admiral Cochrane, remained with me and behaved to me as if I was a brother.

During the stay of the enemy at Bladensburg I received the most polite attention from the officers both of the Navy and Army.

My wound is deep, but I flatter myself not dangerous; the ball is not yet extracted. I fondly hope a few weeks will restore me to health, and that an exchange will take place that I may resume my command, or any other that you and the President may think proper to honor me with. JOSHUA BARNEY.

Hon. WM. JONES, Secretary of the Navy.