

RESIGNATION OF THE CABINET.

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF WAR.

WASHINGTON, April 11th, 1831.

Dear Sir: I feel it to be my duty to refer from the office to which your confidence and possibly called me. The delicacy of this step, under the circumstances in which it is taken, will, I trust, be deemed an ample apology for stating more at large than might otherwise have been necessary, the reasons by which I am influenced.

From the moment of taking my seat in your Cabinet, it has been my anxious wish and zealous endeavor to prevent a premature solution of the question of your successor; and at all events, to discountenance, and if possible repress the disposition of an early day manifested to connect my name with that disturbing tool. Ours is a delicate and the circumstance of this disposition, no one has had a better opportunity to judge than yourself. I was, however, been unavailing. Circumstances, not of my creation, and altogether beyond my control, have given to it a beyond a turn which cannot now be remedied, except by a self-disfranchisement which even if dictated by my individual wishes, could hardly be reconcilable with propriety or self-respect.

Concerning the injurious effects which the circumstance of a member of the Cabinet occupying the relation towards the country to which I have adverted, is calculated to have upon the conduct of the affairs there cannot, I think, at this time, be room for two opinions. Difficulties of ulterior preference among the heads of an administration are unavoidable, and even if the respective advocates of those thus placed in rivalry be patriotic enough to resist the temptation of creating obstacles to the advancement of him to whose elevation they are opposed, by embarrassing the branch of public service committed to his charge, they are nevertheless, by their position, exposed to the suspicion of entertaining and encouraging such views; a suspicion which can seldom fail in the end, to aggravate into present alienation and hostility the prospective differences which first gave rise to it. Thus, under the least unfavorable consequences, individual injustice is suffered, and the administration embarrassed and weakened. Whatever may have been the course of things under the peculiar circumstances of the earlier stage of the republic, my experience has fully satisfied me that, at this day, when the field of selection has become so extended, the circumstances referred to, by augmenting the motives and sources of opposition to the measures of the Executive, must unavoidably prove the cause of injury to the public service, for a counterpoise to which we may vainly look to the peculiar qualifications of any individual, and even if I should in this be mistaken, still I cannot so far deceive myself as to believe for a moment that I am included in the exceptions.

These obstructions to the successful prosecution of public affairs, when superadded to that opposition which is inseparable from our free institutions, and which every administration must expect, present a mass to which the operations of the government should at no time be voluntarily exposed;—the more especially should this be avoided at so eventful a period in the affairs of the world, when our country may particularly need the utmost harmony in her councils.

Such being my impressions, the path of duty is plain; and I not only submit with cheerfulness to whatever personal sacrifices may be involved in the surrender of the station I occupy; but I make it my ambition to set an example which, should it be in the progress of the Government be deemed, notwithstanding the humility of its origin, worthy of respect and observance, cannot, I think, fail to prove essentially and permanently beneficial.

Allow me, Sir, to present one more view of the subject:—You have consented to stand before your constituents for re-election. Of their decision, resting as it does upon the unbought suffrages of a free, numerous, and widely extended people, it becomes no man to speak with certainty. Judging, however, from the past, and making a reasonable allowance for the fair exercise of the intelligence and public spirit of your fellow citizens, I cannot hesitate in adopting the belief that the confidence, as well in your capacity for civil duties as in your civic virtues, already so spontaneously and strikingly displayed will be manifested with increased energy, now, that all candid observers must admit their utmost expectations to have been more than realized.

If this promise, so auspicious to the best interests of our common country, be fulfilled, the concluding term of your Administration will, in the absence of any prominent cause of discord among its supporters, afford a most favorable opportunity for the full accomplishment of those important public objects in the prosecution of which I have witnessed on your part such steady vigilance and untiring devotion. To the unfavorable influence which my continuance in your Cabinet, under existing circumstances,

may exercise upon this flattering prospect, I cannot, Sir, without a total disregard of the lights of experience, and without shutting my eyes to the obvious tendency of things for the future, be insensible. Having, moreover, from a deep conviction of its importance to the country, been among the most urgent of your advisers to yield yourself to the obvious wishes of the People, and knowing the sacrifice of personal feeling which was involved in your acquiescence, I cannot reconcile it to myself to be in a degree the cause of embarrassment to you during the period which, as it certainly will be of deep interest to your country, is moreover destined to bring to its close, your patriotic, toilsome, and eventful public life.

From these considerations, I feel it to be doubly my duty to resign a post, the retention of which is so calculated to attract assaults upon your administration, to which there might otherwise be no inducement—assaults of which, whatever be their aim, the most important as well as most injurious effect is, upon those public interests which deserve and should command the support of all good citizens. This duty, I should have discharged at an earlier period, but for considerations, partly of a public, partly of a personal nature, connected with circumstances which were calculated to expose its performance then to misconception and misrepresentation.

Having explained the motives which govern me in thus severing, and with seeming abruptness, the official ties by which we have been associated, there remains but one duty for me to perform. It is to make my profound and sincere acknowledgment for that steady support and cheering confidence which in the discharge of my public duties I have, under all circumstances, received at your hands; as well as for the personal kindness at all times extended to me.

Rest assured, Sir, that the success of your administration, and the happiness of your private life will ever constitute objects of the deepest solicitude with Your sincere friend and ob't servant, M. VAN BUREN.

THE PRESIDENT.

WASHINGTON, April 12, 1831.

DEAR SIR:—Your letter resigning the office of Secretary of State was received last evening. I could indeed wish that no circumstance had arisen to interrupt the relations which have, for two years, subsisted between us, and that they might have continued through the period during which it may be my lot to remain charged with the duties which the partiality of my countrymen has imposed on me. But the reasons you present are so strong that, with a proper regard for them, I cannot ask you, on my own account to remain in the Cabinet.

I am aware of the difficulties you have had to contend with, and of the benefits which have resulted to the affairs of your country, from your continued zeal in the arduous tasks to which you have been subjected. To say that I deeply regret to lose you, is but feebly to express my feelings on the occasion.

When called by my country to the station which I occupy, it was not without a deep sense of its arduous responsibilities and a strong distrust of myself, that I obeyed the call; but, cheered by the consciousness that no other motive actuated me, than a desire to guard her interests, and to place her upon the firm ground of those principles which, by the wisest and purest of our patriots, have been deemed essential to her prosperity, I ventured upon the trust assigned me. I did this in the confident hope of finding the support of advisers, able and true; who, laying aside every thing but a desire to give new vigor to the vital principles of our Union, would look with a single eye to the best means of effecting this paramount object. In you, this hope has been realized to the utmost. In the most difficult and trying moments of my administration, I have always found you sincere, able, and efficient; anxious at all times to afford me every aid. If, however, from circumstances in your judgment sufficient to make it necessary, the official ties subsisting between us must be severed, I can only say that this necessity is deeply lamented by me. I part with you only because you yourself have requested me to do so, and have sustained that request by reasons strong enough to command my assent. I cannot however, allow the separation to take place without expressing the hope, that this retirement from public affairs is but temporary and that if, in any other station, the Government should have occasion for services, the value of which has been so sensibly felt by me, your consent will not be wanting.

Of the state of things to which you advert I cannot but be fully aware. I look upon it with sorrow, and regret it the more, because one of its first effects is to disturb the harmony of my cabinet. It is, however, but an instance of one of the evils to which free governments must ever be liable. The only remedy for these evils, as they arise, lies in the intelligence and public spirit of our common constituents. They will correct them, and in this there is abundant consolation. I

cannot quit this subject without adding that, with the best opportunities for observing and judging, I have seen in you no other desire than to move quietly on in the path of your duties, and to promote the harmonious conduct of public affairs. If on this point you have had to encounter detraction, it is but another proof of the utter insufficiency of innocence and worth to shield themselves from such assaults.

Be assured that the interest you express in my happiness is most heartily reciprocated—that my most cordial feelings accompany you, and that I am, very sincerely your friend, ANDREW JACKSON.

P. S. It is understood that you are to continue in office until your successor is appointed.

MARTIN VAN BUREN, Secretary of State.

Washington City, 7th April, 1831.

DEAR SIR: Four days ago I communicated to you my desire to relinquish the duties of the War department and I now take occasion to repeat the request which was then made. I am not disposed, by any sudden withdrawal, to interrupt, or retard, the business of the office. A short notice will be sufficient I hope, to enable you to direct your attention towards some person, in whose industry, and friendly disposition, you may have confidence, to assist in the complicated and laborious duties of your administration. Two or three weeks, perhaps less, may be sufficient for the purpose.

In coming to this conclusion, candor demands of me to say, that it arises from no dissatisfaction entertained towards you—from no misunderstanding between us, on any subject; nor from any diminution, on my part, of that friendship and confidence which has ever been reposed in you.

I entered your Cabinet, as it is well known to you, contrary to my own wishes, and having nothing to desire either as it regards myself or friends, have ever since cherished a determination to avail myself of the first favourable moment, after your Administration should be in successful operation, to retire. It occurs to me that the time is now at hand, when I may do so, with propriety, and in proper respect to you.

Looking to the present state of things—to the course of your Administration, which, being fairly developed, is before the people, for approval or condemnation,—I cannot consider the step I am taking, objectionable, or, that it is one, the tendency of which can be to affect or injure a course of policy by you have already advantageously commenced, and which I hope will be carried out to the benefit and advancement of the people.

Tendering my sincere wishes for your prosperity and happiness, and for your successful efforts in the cause of your country,

I am, very truly, your friend, J. H. EATON

To ANDREW JACKSON, President of the U. States.

WASHINGTON CITY, April 8, 1831.

DEAR SIR: Your letter of yesterday was received, and I have carefully considered it. When you conversed with me the other day, on the subject of your withdrawing from the Cabinet, I expressed to you a sincere desire that you would well consider of it; for however reluctant I am to be deprived of your services, I cannot consent to retain you contrary to your wishes and inclinations to remain, particularly as I well know that in 1829, when I invited you to become a member of my Cabinet, you objected and expressed a desire to be excused and only gave up your objections at my pressing solicitation.

An acquaintance with you, of twenty years standing, assured me, that, in your honesty, prudence, capacity, discretion, and judgment, I could safely rely and confide. I have not been disappointed. With the performance of your duties, since you have been with me, I have been fully satisfied, and, go where you will, be your destiny what it may, my best wishes will always attend you.

I will avail myself of the earliest opportunity to obtain some qualified friend to succeed you; and, until then I must solicit that the acceptance of your resignation be deferred.

I am very sincerely and respectfully your friend, ANDREW JACKSON.

Major J. H. EATON, Secretary of War.

MR. INGHAM'S LETTER. Washington, April 18, 1831.

SIR: In communicating to me, this morning, the information of the resigna-

tion of the Secretary of State and Secretary of War, together with the reasons which had induced the former to take this step, you were pleased to observe that this proceeding was made known to me as one of those whom you had associated with you in the administration of the Government, and you suggested that I would, after a few days reflection, have a further conversation with you on this subject. But in recurring to the brief remarks made at the time, as well as to the letter of resignation of the Secretary of State, which you were good enough to submit for my perusal, I have not been able to ascertain what particular matter was intended to be proposed for my reflection, as connected with this event. Under these circumstances, and being desirous of avoiding the possibility of misapprehension, as to your views, I would respectfully inquire whether the measure adopted by the Secretary of State and of War, did indeed involve considerations on which you expect a particular communication from me, and, if so, of what nature.

I have the honor to be respectfully, Your obt. servant, S. D. INGHAM.

To the President of the U. S.

Washington, April 19th, 1831.

SIR:—I am gratified to find myself entirely relieved, by the distinct explanations at the interview to which you invited me, to-day, from the uncertainty as to the object of your communication yesterday, which I had referred to in my note of last evening, and have to make my acknowledgments for the kindness with which you have expressed your satisfaction with the manner in which I have discharged the duties of the station to which you have thought proper to invite me, and your conviction of the public confidence in my administration of the Treasury Department. I beg leave, however, to add, in my own justification for not following the example of the Secretary of State and Secretary of War, in making a voluntary tender of the resignation of my office, as soon as I was acquainted with theirs; that I was wholly unconscious of the application, to myself, of any of the reasons, so far as I was apprised of them, which had induced them to withdraw from the public service. It therefore, seemed to be due to my own character, which might otherwise have been exposed to unfavorable imputations, that I should find a reason for resigning; it a distinct expression of your wish to that effect; this wish has now been frankly announced, and has enabled me to place my retirement on its true ground.

I have, therefore, the honor of tendering to you my resignation of the office of Secretary of the Treasury of the United States which you will be pleased to accept, to take effect as soon as my services may be dispensed with consistently with your views of the public interest.

I seize the occasion to offer you my thanks for the many testimonials I have received of your kindness and confidence during our official connexions, and especially for the renewed assurance this day of the same sentiment.

S. D. INGHAM, His Excellency Andrew Jackson, President of the U. S.

Washington, April 20th, 1831.

SIR: Late last evening I had the honor to receive your letter of that date, tendering your resignation of the office of Secretary of the Treasury. When the resignations of the Secretary of State and the Secretary of War, were tendered, I considered fully the reasons offered, and all the circumstances connected with the subject. After mature deliberation, I concluded to accept those resignations. But when this conclusion was come to, it was accompanied with a conviction that I must entirely renew my cabinet. Its members had been invited by me to the stations they occupied—it had come together in great harmony, and as a unit. Under the circumstances in which I found myself, I could not perceive the propriety of selecting a cabinet composed of entirely new materials, as being calculated, in this respect at least, to command public confidence and satisfy public opinion. Neither could I be insensible to the fact that to permit two only to retire would be to afford room for unjust misconceptions and malignant misrepresentations concerning the influence of their particular presence upon the conduct of public affairs. Justice to the individuals whose public spirit had impelled them to tender their resignations, also required then, in my opinion, the decision which I have stated, however painful to my own feelings, it became necessary that I should frankly make known to you the whole subject.

In accepting of your resignation, it is with great pleasure that I bear testimony to the integrity and zeal with which you have managed the fiscal concerns of the nation. In your discharge of all the duties of your office, over which I have had any control, I have been fully satisfied; and in your retirement you carry with you my best wishes for your prosperity and happiness.

It is expected that you will continue to discharge the duties of your office until a successor is appointed.

I have the honor to be, with great respect, your most obedient servant, ANDREW JACKSON.

Saml. D. Ingham, Sec'y of the Treasury.

WASHINGTON, April 19th, 1831. SIR: In the interview which I had the honor to hold with you this morning, I understood it to be your fixed purpose to reorganize your Cabinet, and that as to myself it was your wish that I should retire from the administration of the Navy Department.

Under these circumstances, I take pleasure in tendering to you the commission, which, unsolicited on my part, you were pleased to confer on me.

I have the honor to be, With great respect, yours, &c. JOHN BRANCH, To the President U. S.

WASHINGTON, April 19th, 1831.

SIR: Your letter of this date, by your son, is just received—accompanying it is your commission. The sending of the latter was not necessary; it is your own private property, and by no means to be considered part of the archives of the Government. Accordingly, I return it.

There is one expression in your letter to which I take leave to except. I did, not as to yourself, express a wish that you should retire. The Secretary of State, and of War, having tendered their resignations, I remarked to you, that I felt it to be indispensable to reorganize my Cabinet, proper,—that it had come in harmoniously, and as a part was about to leave me, which on to-morrow would be announced, a reorganization was necessary to guard against misrepresentation. These were my remarks, making you in candor and sincerity. Your letter gives a different import to my words.

Your letter contains no remark as to your performing the duties of the office until a successor can be selected. On this subject I should be glad to know your views.

I am, very respectfully, yours, ANDREW JACKSON, The Hon. JOHN BRANCH, Secretary of the Navy.

WASHINGTON, April 19th, 1831.

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of yours of this date, in answer to mine of the same.

In reply to your remark that there is one expression in my letter to which you must except, I would respectfully answer that I gave what I understood to be the substance of your conversation. I did not pretend to quote your language.

I regret that I misunderstood you in the slightest degree; I however, stand corrected, and cheerfully accept the interpretation which you have given to your own expression.

I shall freely continue my best exertions to discharge the duties of the Department, until you provide a successor.

I have the honor to be, with the respect, your obt. servt. JOHN BRANCH, To the President U. S.

WASHINGTON, April 20, 1831.

SIR: Late last evening, I had the honor to receive your letter of that date, tendering your resignation of the office of Secretary of the Navy.

When the resignations of the Secretary of State and Secretary of War were tendered, I considered fully the reasons offered, and all the circumstances connected with the subject. After mature deliberation, I concluded to accept those resignations. But when this conclusion was come to, it was accompanied with a conviction that I must entirely renew my Cabinet. Its members had been invited by me to the stations they occupied—it had come together in great harmony, and as a unit. Under the circumstances in which I found myself, I could not perceive the propriety of selecting a cabinet composed of entirely new materials, as being calculated, in this respect at least, to command public confidence and satisfy public opinion. Neither could I be insensible to the fact that to permit two only to retire would be to afford room for unjust misconceptions and malignant misrepresentations concerning the influence of their particular presence upon the conduct of public affairs. Justice to the individuals whose public spirit had impelled them to tender their resignations, also required then, in my opinion, the decision which I have stated. However painful to my own feelings, it became necessary that I should frankly make known to you my view of the whole subject.

In accepting your resignation, it is with great pleasure that I bear testimony to the integrity and zeal with which you have managed the concerns of the Navy. In your discharge of all the duties of your office, over which I have any control, I have been fully satisfied; and in your retirement you carry with you my best wishes for your prosperity and happiness.

It is expected that you will continue to discharge the duties of your office until a successor is appointed.

I have the honor to be, with great respect, your most obedient servant, ANDREW JACKSON, JOHN BRANCH, Secretary of the Navy.