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BY GEORGE HOWARD.

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Letters addressed to the Editor must be post paid, or they may not be attended to.

DOMESTIC.

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION.

Col. Benton's Letter to the State of Mississippi.

Washington City, Jan. 1, 1835.

Dear Sir: We have learned that you have declined permitting your name to be used, as a candidate for the Vice Presidency of the United States, and that you have addressed a letter to that effect, some time since, to the Committee of the State Convention of Mississippi, by whom you were nominated for that high office. It will be a considerable time before your determination, communicated through that channel, can be known to the People of the United States—we, therefore, request the favor of a copy of your letter, if you retained one, for publication at this place, in order that your friends elsewhere, as well as in Mississippi, may have an early opportunity of turning their attention to some other suitable person.

ROBERT T. LYTLE,
(of Ohio.)
HENRY HUBBARD,
(of New Hampshire,)
RATLIFF BOON,
(of Indiana,)
H. A. MUHLENBERG,
(of Pennsylvania.)

Hon. Thos. H. Benton.

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Washington City, Jan. 2d, 1835.

Gentlemen—I herewith send you a copy of my letter, declining the nomination of the Mississippi State Convention for the Vice Presidency of the United States.—Fairness towards my political friends in every part of the Union, required me to let them know at once what my determination was; and this I have done in many private letters, and in all the conversations which I have held on the subject. The nomination in Mississippi was the first one which came from a State Convention, and therefore the first one which seemed to me to justify a public letter, and to present the question, in such a form as would save me from the ridicule of declining what no State had offered. The letter to Mississippi was intended for publication, and to save my friends any further trouble on my account. It was expected to reach, in its circuit, my friends in every quarter; and as you suggest that it must be a considerable time before it could return from the State of Mississippi, through the newspapers, and that in the meantime my friends elsewhere might wish earlier information, that they might turn their attention to some other person, I cheerfully comply with your request, and furnish the copy for publication here.

Yours, respectfully,

THOMAS H. BENTON.

Messrs. R. T. Lytle, H. Hubbard, R. Boon, and H. A. Muhlenberg.

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Washington City, Dec. 16, 1834.

Dear Sir: Your kind letter of the 6th ultimo has been duly received, and I take great pleasure in returning you my thanks for the friendship you have shewn me, and which I shall be happy to acknowledge by acts, rather than words, whenever an opportunity shall occur.

The recommendation for the Vice Presidency of the United States, which the Democratic Convention of your State has done me the honor to make, is, in the highest degree, flattering and honorable to me, and commands the expression of my deepest gratitude; but, justice to myself, and to our political friends, requires me to say at once, and with the candor, and decision, which rejects all disguise, and palters with no retraction, that I cannot consent to go upon the list of candidates for the eminent office for which I have been proposed.

I consider the ensuing election for President and Vice President, as among the most important that ever took place in our country; ranking with that of 1800, when the democratic principle first triumphed in the person of Mr. Jefferson, and with the two elections of 1828, and 1832, when the same principle again triumphed in the person of General Jackson, and I should look upon all the advantages recovered for the Constitution, and the people in these two last triumphs, as lost, and gone, unless the democracy of the Union shall again triumph in the election of 1836. To succeed in that election, will require the most perfect harmony and union, among ourselves. To secure this union and harmony, we must have as few aspirants for the office of President, and Vice President, as possible; and, to diminish the number of these aspirants, I, for one, shall refuse to go upon the list; and will remain in the ranks of the voters, ready to support the cause of democracy, by supporting the election of the candidate which shall be selected by a General Convention of the Democratic party.

But, while respectfully declining for myself, the highly honorable and flattering recommendation of your Convention, I take a particular pleasure in expressing the gratification which I feel, at seeing the nomination which you have made in favor of Mr. Van Buren. I have known that gentleman long and intimately. We entered the Senate of the United States together, thirteen years ago, sat six years in seats next to each other, were always personally friendly, generally acted together on leading subjects, and always interchanged communications, and reciprocated confidence: and thus, occupying a position to give me an opportunity of becoming thoroughly acquainted with his principles and character, the result of the whole has been, that I have long since considered him, and so indicated him to my friends, as the most fit and suitable person to fill the presidential chair after the expiration of President Jackson's 2d term. In political principles, he is thoroughly democratic, and comes as near the Jeffersonian standard as any statesman now on the stage of public life. In abilities, experience and business habits, he is beyond the reach of cavil, or dispute: Personally he is inattackable; for, the whole volume of his private life contains not a single act which requires explanation, or defence. In constitutional temperament he is peculialy adapted to the station, and the times; for no human being could be more free from every taint of envy, malignity, or revenge; or, could possess, in a more eminent degree, that happy conjunction of firmness of purpose, with sauvity of manners, which contributes so much to the successful administration of public affairs, and is so essential, and becoming, in a high public functionary. The State from which he comes, and of which, successive elections for two and twenty years prove him to be the favorite son, is also to be taken into the account in the list of his recommendations; that great State, which, in the eventful struggle of 1800, turned the scales of the presidential election of Mr. Jefferson,—which has supported every democratic administration from that day to this; a State which now numbers two millions of inhabitants,—gives forty-two votes in the presidential election,—and never saw one of her own sons exalted to the presidential office.

But, what has he done? What has Mr. Van Buren done, that he should be elected President? This is the inquiry, as flippantly, as ignorantly, put by those who would veil, or disparage, the merits of this gentleman, when it would be much more regular and pertinent to ask, what has such a man as this done, that he should *not* be made President?—But, to answer the inquiry as put: It might, perhaps, be sufficient, so far at least as the comparative merits of competitors are concerned, to point to his course in the Senate of the United States during the eight years he sat in that body; and to his conduct since in the high offices to which he has been called by his native State, by President Jackson, and by the American People. This might be sufficient between Mr Van Buren and others; but it would not be sufficient for himself. Justice to him would require the answer to go further back,—to the war of 1812,—when he was a member of the New York Senate; when the fate of Mr. Madison's administration, and of the Union itself, depended upon the conduct of that great State—great in men and in means—and greater in position; a frontier to New England and Canada—to British arms and Hartford Convention treason;—and when that conduct, to the dismay of every patriot bosom, was seen to hang, for nearly two years, in the doubtful scales of suspense. The federalists had the majority in the House of Representatives; the democracy had the Senate and the Governor; and for two successive sessions no measure could be adopted in support of the war. Every aid proposed by the Governor and Senate, was rejected by the House of Representatives. Every State paper issued by one, was answered by the other. Continual disagreements took place; innumerable conferences were had; the hall of the House of Representatives was the scene of contestation; and every conference was a public exhibition of parliamentary conflict—a public trial of intellectual gladiation—in which each side, represented by committees of its ablest men, and in the presence of both houses, and of assembled multitudes exerted itself to the utmost to justify itself, and to put the other in the wrong, to operate upon public opinion, govern the impending elections, and acquire the ascendency in the ensuing legislature.

Mr. Van Buren, then a young man, had just entered the Senate at the commencement of this extraordinary struggle. He entered it, November, 1812; and had just distinguished himself in the opposition of his country to the renewal of the first National Bank charter, in the support of Vice President Clinton for giving the casting vote against it, and in their noble support of Governor Tompkins, for his Roman energy in proroguing the General Assembly, (April, 1812,) which could not otherwise be prevented from receiving, and embodying, the transmigratory soul of that defunct institution, and giving it a new existence in a new place, under an altered name, and modified form.—He was politically borne out of this conflict, and came into the legislature against the Bank, and for the war. He was the man which the occasion required; the ready writer—prompt debater—judicious counsellor—courteous in manners—firm in purpose—inflexible in principles. He contrived the measures—brought forward the bills and reports—delivered the speeches—and drew the State papers, (especially the powerful address to the republican voters of the State,) which, eventually, vanquished the Federal party, turned the doubtful scales, and gave the elections of April, 1814, to the friends and supporters of Madison and the war; an event, the intelligence of which was received at Washington with an exultation only inferior to that, with which was received the news of the victory of New Orleans. The new Legislature, now democratic in both branches, was quickly convened by Governor Tompkins; and Mr. Van Buren had the honor to bring forward, and carry through, amidst the applauses of patriots, and the denunciation of the anti-war party, the most energetic war measure every adopted in our America,—the classification bill, as he called it: the conscription bill, as they called it. By this bill, the provisions of which, by a new and summary process, were so contrived as to act upon property, as well as upon persons, an army of twelve thousand State troops, were immediately to be raised, to serve for two years, and to be placed at the disposition of the General Government.

The peace which was signed in the last days of December, 1814, rendered this great measure of New York inoperative; but its merit was acknowledged by all patriots at the time: the principle of it was adopted by Mr. Madison's Administration; recommended by the Secretary of War, Mr. Monroe, to the Congress of the United States, and found by that body too energetic to be passed. To complete his course in support of the war, and to crown his meritorious labors to bring it to a happy close, it became Mr. Van Buren's fortune to draw up the vote of thanks of the greatest State in the Union, to the greatest General which the war had produced,—"*the thanks of the N. Y. Legislature to Major General Jackson, his gallant officers and troops, for their wonderful, and heroic victory, in defence of the grand emporium of the West.*" Such was the appropriate conclusion to his patriotic services in support of the war; services, to be sure not rivalling in splendor the heroic achievements of victorious arms; but services, nevertheless, both honorable, and meritorious, in their place; and without which battles cannot be fought, victories cannot be won, nor countries be saved. Martial renown, it is true, he did not acquire, nor attempt; but the want of that fascination to his name can hardly be objected to him, in these days, when the political ascendancy of military chieftains is so pathetically deplored, and when the entire perils of the Republic are supposed to be compressed into the single danger of military despotism.

Such is the answer, in brief, and in part, to the flippant inquiry, What has he done?

The vote in the Senate, for the tariff of 1828, has sometimes been objected to Mr. Van Buren; but with how much ignorance of the truth, let facts attest.

He was the first eminent member of Congress, north of the Potomac, to open the war at the right point, upon that tariff of 1828, then undergoing the process of incubation through the instrumentality of a Convention to sit at Harrisburg. His speech at Albany, in July, 1827, openly characterized that measure as a political manœuvre to influence the impending presidential election; and the graphic expression, "a measure proceeding more from the closet of the politician than from the workshop of the manufacturer," so opportunely, and felicitously, used in that speech, soon became the opinion of the public, and subsequently received the impress of verification from the abandonment, and the manner of abandoning, of the whole fabric of the high-tariff policy. Failing to carry any body into the presidential chair, its doom pronounced by the election of Jackson and Van Buren, it was abandoned, as it had been created, upon a political calculation, and expired under a fiat emanating, not from the workshop of the manufacturer, but from the closet of the politician. True, that Mr. Van Buren voted for the Tariff of 1828, notwithstanding his speech of 1827; but, equally true, that he voted under instructions from his State Legislature, and in obedience to the great democratic principle (*demos*, the people, *krateo*, to govern,) which has always formed a distinguished feature and a dividing land mark, between the two great political parties, which, under whatsoever name has always existed, and still exist, in our country. Sitting in the chair next to him at the time of that vote, voting as he did, and upon the same principle, interchanging opinions without reserve or disguise, it comes within the perception of my own senses to know, that he felt great repugnance to the provisions of that tariff act of '28, and voted for it, as I did, in obedience to a principle which we both hold sacred.

No public man, since the days of Mr. Jefferson, has been pursued with more bitterness than Mr. Van Buren; none, not excepting Mr. Jefferson himself, has ever had to withstand the combined assaults of so many, and such formidable powers. His prominent position, in relation to the next Presidency, has drawn upon him the general attack of other candidates,—themselves as well as their friends; for, in these days, (how different from former times!) Candidates for the Presidency are seen to take the field for themselves,—banging away at their competitors,—sounding the notes of their own applause,—and dealing in the tricks, and cant, of veteran cross road or ale-house electioneerers. His old opposition, and early declaration (1826) against the Bank of the U. States, has brought upon him the pervading vengeance of that powerful institution; and subjected him to the vicarious vituperation of subaltern assailants, inflamed with a wrath, not their own, in whatsoever spot that terrific institution maintains a branch, or a press, retains an adherent, or holds a debtor. (It was under the stimulus, and predictions of the Bank press, that Mr. Van Buren was rejected by the Senate in 1832.) Yet, in all this combination of powers against him, and in all these unrelenting attacks, there is no specification of misconduct. All is vague, general, indefinite, mysterious. Mr. Crawford, the most open, direct, and palpable of public men, was run down upon the empty cry of "giant at intrigue!" A second edition of that cry, now stereotpyed for harder use, is expected to perform the same service upon Mr. Van Buren; while the originators and repeaters of the cry, in both instances, have found it equally impossible to specify a case of intrigue in the life of one, or the other of these gentlemen.

Safety fund banks, is another of those cries raised against him; as if there was any thing in the system of those banks to make the banking system worse; or, as if the money, and politics of these safety fund banks, were at the service of Mr. Van Buren. On the contrary it is not even pretended by his enemies that he owns a single dollar of stock in any one of these banks! And I have been frequently informed, from sources entitled to my confidence, that he does not own a dollar of interest in any Bank in the world! That he has wholly abstained from becoming the owner of any bank stock, or taking an interest in any company incorporated by the Legislature, since he first became a member of that body, about two-and-twenty years ago. And as for the politics of the safety fund banks, it has been recently and authentically shown, that a vast majority of them are under the control of his most determined and active opponents.

No public man has been more opposed to the extension of the banking system than Mr. Van Buren. The journals of the New York Legislature show that the many years during which he was a prominent member of that body, he exerted himself in a continued and zealous opposition to the increase of banks; and, upon his election to the Chief Magistracy of the State, finding the system of banks so incorporated with the business and interests of the People as to render its abolishment impossible, he turned his attention to its improvement, and to the establishment of such guards against fraudulent, or, even unfortunate bankruptcy, as would, under all circumstances, protect the holders of notes against loss. The safety fund system was the result of views of this kind; and if its complete success hitherto (for no bank has failed under it) and the continued support and confidence of the representatives of two millions of people, are not sufficient to attest its efficacy, there is one consideration at least, which should operate so far in its favor as to save it from the sneers of those who cannot tell what the safety-fund system is; and that is, the perfect ease and composure with which the whole of these banks rode out the storm of Senatorial and United States Bank attack, panic, and pressure, upon them last winter! This consideration should save Mr. Van Buren from the censure of some people, if it cannot attract their applause. For the rest, he is a real hard-money man; opposed to the paper system—in favor of a national currency of gold—in favor of an adequate silver currency for common use—against the small note currency—and in favor of confining bank notes to their appropriate sphere and original function, that of large notes for large transactions and mercantile operations.

Non-committal, is another of the flippant phrases got by rote and parroted against Mr. Van Buren. He never commits himself, say these veracious observers! He never shows his hand, till he sees which way the game was going? Is this true? Is there any foundation for it? On the contrary, is it not contradicted by public and notorious facts for near a quarter of a century? By the uniform tenor of his entire public life? To repeat nothing of what has been said of his opposition to the first Bank of the United States, his support of Vice President Clinton for giving the casting vote against the re-charter of that institution, his support of Governor Tompkins, in the extaordinary measure of proroguing the New York Legislature, to prevent the metempsychosis of the Bank, and its revivification, in the City of New York; to repeat nothing of all this, and of his undaunted and brilliant support of the war, from its beginning to its end, I shall refer only to what has happened in my own time, and under my own eyes. His firm, and devoted support of Mr. Crawford, in the contest of 1824, when that eminent citizen, prostrate with disease, and inhumanly assailed, seemed to be doomed to inevitable defeat; was that non-committal?

His early espousal of Gen. Jackson's cause, after the election in the House of Representatives, in February, 1825, and his steadfast opposition to Mr. Adams's administration; was that non-committal? His prominent stand against the Panama Mission, when that mission was believed to be irresistibly popular, and was pressed upon the Senate to crush the opposition members; was that also a wily piece of non-commit-