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TO THE PUBLIC.

Circumstances beyond my control have placed me under the necessity of presenting myself to your notice. I assert no claim to your attention, which does not belong equally to every free citizen of the Republic. But I ask, and I feel that I have a right to expect, your candid consideration of this address. Its subject is one of awakening interest to us all. The position in which I find myself has nothing inviting in it. It is one which I have not sought, but which has been forced upon me, and one in which I am called upon to vindicate not my self merely, but the cause of truth and the best and dearest interests of the community, at a hazard to which fatuity alone could be insensible.

The misrepresentations of a public journal, professing to speak the language of the President of the United States, and published under his eye, have presented to me the alternative, of submitting to an imputation, alike dishonorable and unfounded in fact, or of meeting the issue which has been tendered to me under the alleged authority of that high officer. If I do not shrink from this unequivocal strife, it is because I have a confidence which has never wavered, in the intelligence of my countrymen a firm and unshaken reliance in the justice of that tribunal, whose high prerogative it is at all times, and under all circumstances to vindicate the cause of truth.

I have studiously abstained from any effort to excite public feeling in relation to the dissolution of the late Cabinet. I have felt that the question of its propriety was one, the decision of which belonged alone to the American People. Personally I have not been disposed to deny the right of the President to exercise his own free will as well in the change, as in the original selection of his Cabinet; and with a perfect sense of the delicacy of my own situation, I would have been at all times a reluctant witness in the investigation of the causes which led to those events. It was sufficient enough that I should submit myself to his will although the principle by which it was avowedly regulated, could have no application to me; for this I have unhesitatingly done. But I have been required silently to witness the entire misrepresentation of occurrences which the public were well aware must have come under my observation; nay, to be publicly vouched as authority for that which was directly in conflict with my convictions of truth—and finally to be called to vindicate my own claim to veracity, assailed as it is under the alleged authority of the President of the United States, or to submit to an imputation which no honorable man may bear. I mistake the character of the American People, if they would require this. I am totally ignorant of my own, if, under any circumstances, I could yield to it. If in the face of this great community the cause of truth can be prostrated by the arm of power, at least the privilege of vindicating it shall not be tamely surrendered in my person. I will bow to the decision of my countrymen but whatever that decision may be the high consolation of having faithfully discharged my duty to them and to myself, shall not be taken from me.

The disingenuous and unmanly suggestion of my desire to remain in the Cabinet of General Jackson, notwithstanding the occurrences which produced my retirement, will be my apology for adverting briefly to the origin of my connexion with it, and to the circumstances which induced its continuance.

It was without any solicitation on my part, or so far as I know or believe on the part of any of my friends, that I was invited to accept the office of Attorney General of the United States. There were circumstances, temporary in their nature, but still strongly operative, which rendered it not desirable to me. I felt, however, that I was called to decide upon the question of my acceptance, not merely as an individual, but as a citizen, and especially as a citizen of Georgia. On certain principles of general policy some of which were particularly interesting to the people of that State, the views communicated to me by the President, were in accordance with my own: and I felt it to be my duty, not to withhold any assistance which I could give to carry them into effect. The annunciation of the names of the intended Cabinet seemed to me however, to present an insuperable bar to my acceptance of the office which was tendered to me. I thought I foresaw clearly the evils which have too obviously resulted from this selection. A stranger to Gen. Jackson, I could not with propriety discuss these objections with him. I knew more-over, that some of his confidential friends had faithfully discharged their duty to him, and to the country, by a frank communication of them. In this state of things, I sought the counsel of those around me. To a gentleman high in the confidence of the President, and to a distinguished citizen of my own State, I submitted the inquiry, whether with this view of the Cabinet which the President had selected, I could with propriety become a member of it. The former expressed his decided conviction, founded on a long and intimate knowledge of the President's character, that he would himself speedily see and correct the evil. The latter urged the peculiar relations of Georgia with the General Government, as presenting a strong claim upon me not to refuse the invitation which had been given to me. I yielded to these suggestions, and took my place in the Cabinet, with a firm determination to avoid the controversies which I feared might occur. To that determination I have steadily adhered.—Associating on terms of courtesy with my colleagues, my official intercourse with them was never interrupted by discord.

If there were any combinations growing out of the supposed conflict between the interests of Mr. Calhoun and Mr. Van Buren, I had no part in them—and as little in the supposed measures of that character, having for their object to coerce Major Eaton to retire from the Cabinet or to exclude his family from the society of Washington. With mine they did not associate; but no advance had been made on either side, and their actual relation seemed therefore to furnish no just ground of offence to either party. In this posture of things, and shortly after I had given an evening party to which Mrs. Eaton had not been invited, I received and heard with infinite surprise the message of Col. Johnson.

I could make no mistake as to its character, for there was a direct and repeated reference to the large parties, which had been then recently given by Messrs. Branch and Ingham, and myself. Such a mistake, if it had been one, would have been instantly corrected, from the nature of my reply. If the complaint had been of a combination to *evict Major Eaton from office*, and not to *exclude his family from society*, the reference to these evening parties would have been idle: and my declaration that I would not permit the President to control the local intercourse of myself and family, would have been instantly met by an explanation, which would have removed the impression from the minds of Messrs. Branch and Ingham and myself. Yet we all parted with Col Johnson, with a clear conviction that such a proposition had been made, and feeling as we all did, that an indignity had been offered to us, there was, as I believe, no difference of opinion between us as to the course we ought to pursue, if this proposition should be avowed and pressed by the President.

This conversation took place on Wednesday evening, and the rumour of our intended removal speedily became general. On the succeeding day, the personal friends of Gen. Jackson interposed and he was awakened to a sense of the impropriety of his projected course. It was then, according to Col. Johnson's statement to Mr. Ingham, that the paper spoken of by the Editor of the Globe was prepared. My two Colleagues had their interview with the President on the succeeding day (Friday) and as Mr. Ingham's statement made from full notes taken at the time, proves, no paper was shown to him on that occasion. Owing to a mistake in the communication of the President's wishes to me, I did not see him until the succeeding day (Saturday,) and then the excitement of his feelings had so entirely subsided, that he seemed to me to be anxious to dispose of the subject as briefly as possible. He spoke of the falsehood of the reports against Mrs. Eaton, of which he said he had sufficient proof, and upon my declining to discuss that question, he complained of the injustice of excluding her from society: referred to the large parties given by Messrs. Ingham and Branch, and myself and told me if he could have been convinced that there was a combination between those gentlemen and myself to exclude her from society, that he would have required our resignations. He immediately added that such combination, and again referred to those large parties, and to the rumors to which they had given rise, as having produced that impression. So far from then suggesting that information had been received from any member of Congress, when I claimed the right of having the names of any persons who had made to him representations unfavorable to my conduct he still referred to the thousand rumors which had reached him as to the origin of such impression which had been made upon his mind. He showed me no paper—spoke to me of none—intimated to me no terms which he would hereafter require. By his declaration that he did not intend to press the requisition which he had made through Col. Johnson, I considered the object of the interview to be to explain to me the motives under which he had acted and to announce the change of his determination. He accompanied this with expressions of personal kindness, which I thought were intended to soothe the feelings which he must have been conscious of having excited till I thought it was improper for me longer to remain in the Cabinet. Admitting that sufficient atonement had been made for the indignity offered by the message sent through Col Johnson there was a perpetual liability to the recurrence of similar outrage. I believed it, therefore, to be my duty to retire. My friends thought otherwise, and my own sense of what the interests of Georgia at that particular crisis required, induced me to repress my feelings.

When at a subsequent period, the controversy occurred between the President and Vice-President, I thought I saw in this, the evidence of an intention again to agitate the question, which by the agency of the personal friends of General Jackson, had been before happily repressed. The connection of Mr. Crawford with this controversy and my own relation to General Jackson, forbade me to take any part in it—and I studiously avoided all interference except to deprecate Mr. Calhoun's publication. I left Washington on the fourth day of April, one day after Major Eaton had announced to the President his determination to resign, according to the statement in his (Maj. Eaton's) letter of resignation, and not the slightest intimation was given to me of the intended change in the Cabinet. But when I saw the correspondence between the President and the several Heads of Departments I could not doubt for a moment how, and by whom the dissolution had been produced. I did not feel at liberty to express my views generally, until my return to Washington should enable me to dissolve my connexion with the President; but to a few friends who had the right to understand my actual position, I stated the utter impossibility of my continuance in the Cabinet, unless the President placed the retirement of my colleagues on other grounds than those which I believed to have occasioned it, and such as I could approve. In full view of the speedy dissolution of all connection between the President and myself, I availed myself of the occasion afforded by the kindness of my fellow citizens of Savannah, to do an act of justice to his public conduct, on a question vitally interesting to the people of Georgia. If there be any man who is incapable of understanding, or appreciating the motive which prompted this act, I cannot envy his feelings, and will not attempt to enlighten his understanding. I returned to this city, had a conversation with the President of which the prominent points are adverted to in my letter of resignation which immediately followed it, and having brought up the public business, which was in arrear, retired from office.

While these occurrences were in progress, Major Eaton addressed to me a letter of like import with his first communication to Mr. Ingham. He called upon me to sanction or disavow the statement in the Telegraph, that my family had refused to associate with his. I answered by detailing the conversation which had passed between myself and Col. Johnson, and stated that I had subsequently expressed the same views to the President, who had disclaimed any disposition to press the requisition, referring to that which I had previously stated to have been made through Col. Johnson. The Editor of the Globe has published his detached sentence of my letter, and has made an impotent attempt to distort its meaning. The public shall judge of the whole correspondence for themselves. I had no disposition to publish this correspondence. Perfectly satisfied that it would at all times speak for itself, and not emulous of reputation to be acquired in such controversies I have resisted numerous calls which have been made upon me through different journals to give to the public. But the Editor of the Globe, in possession of it, and by the publication of an isolated extract, attempts to do me injustice. I exercise a right, therefore, which belongs to me, when I take from him this unfair means of annoyance, by giving the whole to the public:

FRIDAY NIGHT, 17th June, 1831.

Sir: I have studied to disregard the abusive slanders which have arisen through so debased a source as the United States' Telegraph. I have been content to wait for the full development of what he had to say, at until persons of responsible character should be brought forth to endorse his vile abuse of me and my family. In that paper of this evening is contained the following remark of myself: "It is proven that the Secretaries of the Treasury, & of the Navy, and of the Attorney General, refused to associate with her." This publication appears in a paper which professes to be friendly to you, and is brought forth under your immediate eye. I desire to know of you whether or not you sanction this statement or disavow it. The relation we have sustained towards each other authorizes me to demand an immediate answer. Very respectfully,

J. H. EATON.

Jno. M. Berrien, Esq.

WASHINGTON, 18th June, 1831.

Sir: I received to-day your note of last night, in which you call my attention to an article in the U. S. Telegraph of the 17th instant relating to your wife—and desiring to know whether I will sanction or disavow that statement, you add, "the relation we have sustained towards each other, authorises me to demand an immediate answer."

To this inquiry preferred as a matter of right and presented in the form of a demand, my answer must be brief. It consists in the simple denial of the claim which you assert. I cannot recognise your right to interrogate me concerning the statements of the Telegraph, or of any other public journal which are made without my agency. You [illegible] to the question "and if the [illegible] assert be well founded, I must [illegible] the instance of any person aggrieved by [illegible] my confession of faith, in relation to the various statements to be found in any of the journals, in which my name may chance to be mentioned. Such a demand, therefore, cannot be admitted for a moment. But although I cannot recognise your right, either as derived from the relation which we have sustained towards each other, or from any other source, to make the demand presented by your note, I am not quite sure, looking to the position in which we stand before the public, that I can acquit myself to the community or to myself for declining to answer your inquiry.

In the progress of those events which have at length resulted in the dissolution of the Cabinet, my determination was not to do any act which was calculated to provoke controversy, nor to deviate under whatever urgency from the line of conduct, which my own sense of propriety prescribed. Acting upon this determination, I have necessarily pursued a course which a refusal to answer your inquiry, might seem to indicate an unwillingness to avow—such an inference would be unjust as it regards myself and delusive in relation to the public. Although therefore I have the most unaffected reluctance to enter upon such a subject, and certainly do not acquiesce in your right to demand it, it seems to me that you have by making the inquiry imposed upon me the obligation to do so, from a just consideration of what I owe to myself and to the public.

I have then to state to you that up to the time of your marriage, *I* had not heard the rumors, which have since in various forms been presented to the public, and was ignorant of Mrs. Eaton's relation to the society of this place. I accepted your invitation to be present at your wedding, therefore, with no distrust, of the propriety of my doing so, other than that which resulted from my own situation at that period. You are yourself no doubt aware how much that event, and your subsequent introduction into the Cabinet, made these rumors the subject of conversation. I could no longer continue in ignorance of that which was publicly and generally spoken of, and it consequently became necessary for me, embarrassed as the question was, by the official relation in which we stood to each other, to determine upon my future conduct. In doing this, it did not seem to be necessary, to decide upon the truth or falsehood of the statements which were made. It was sufficient to ascertain the general sense of the community of which I had recently become a member; and having done so, to conform to it. In the winter of 1830, as I presume is known to you, I was called upon by a gentleman, who represented himself as acting, and who I doubt not did act, under the authority of the President, to express with precise reference to this subject the regret which he felt at the want of harmony, or of social intercourse among the members of his Cabinet, and to announce his determination at any rate to have it. Messrs. Ingham and Branch were present at this interview. The fact was distinctly stated that they and myself had successively given very large parties to which Mrs. Eaton had not been invited. We were then told that on such occasions at least the President would expect in future a social intercourse between our respective families. There were various other suggestions made during this conversation, but the recapitulation of them is not rendered necessary by your inquiry. I answered to this communication for myself, that I would not permit the President, nor any other individual to regulate the social intercourse of myself or family—and that if such a requisition was persevered in, I would retire from the official situation which I held. In the interview to which I was invited by the President some few days afterwards, I frankly expressed to him my views on this subject, and he disclaimed any disposition to press such a requisition. I am not aware that any other occasion has occurred in which the question of an intercourse between your family and mine has been presented to me or to my family.

I am, respectfully, your obedient servant,

JOHN MACPHERSON BERRIEN.

To J. H. Eaton, Esq.

Monday Morning, 8 o'clock.

Sir: I have received your note of the 18th inst. It may become necessary for me to offer something in reply. For the present I have engagements which prevent me from doing more than to acknowledge that it has been received.

Very respectfully,

J. H. EATON.

Mr. Berrien. 20th June, 1831.

June 22d, 1831.

Sir: I have not had leisure to reply to your letter of the 18th until to day. It involved matter which it behooved me to give a full and calm consideration to. That has been given.

I felt indisposed to believe that these attacks of General Green could be authorised by you or were made under your sanction. Your declaration is evidence of the correctness of what I was before impressed with. I take occasion, therefore, with pleasure, to acknowledge the frankness with which you have disavowed an agency in this nefarious business.

Respectfully, your most obedient,

J. H. EATON.

J. M. Berrien, Esq.

Washington, 23d June, 1831.

Sir: Your note of yesterday was received in the course of the day. I was too much indisposed, however to reply to it at that moment, and do so now merely to prevent misconception.

In your note of the 17th instant you called upon me to sanction or disavow the *statement* contained in a publication in the Telegraph of that date. I could not recognize your right to make this demand, but for the reasons mentioned in my reply, I thought it was proper to state to you what I had done, in relation to this matter. To do this was the only object of that note.

You are quite right, however, in believing that I had no agency in procuring the publication of the statement referred to. And adverting to the spirit of your last note, I have no hesitation in thus confirming the conviction which you have expressed.

I am respectfully,

JN MACPHERSON BERRIEN.

To J. H. Eaton, Esq.

Shortly after this I received a letter from Col. Johnson, which gave a reply. I feel anxiously desired to delay this until I could [illegible] Col. Johnson's answer. Perhaps I have waited long enough; for my reply, according to the memorandum which [illegible] dated on the 7th inst. But it is not this circumstance which has determined me. Col Johnson has furnished to the editor of the Globe a statement, full or otherwise, of what passed between Messrs. Branch and Ingham and myself, and himself, on the occasion so often referred to. Extracts from this statement are used to do me injustice. This is done, to be sure, without the authority of Col. Johnson but he has furnished the means which are thus improperly used, and I have no alternative but to give the correspondence or submit to continued misrepresentation. I publish Col. Johnson's letter, as an act of justice to him, that the public may be in full possession of his statement. My reply follows; and after this the letter and statement of Mr. Ingham, to whom as well as to Mr. Branch I forwarded a copy of Col. Johnson's letter. From Mr. Branch I have received no reply; owing, as I suppose, to his absence from home.

Col. R. M. Johnson to Messrs. Berrien and Ingham.

Great Crossing, 30th June, 1831.

Gentlemen. The Telegraph has alluded to some communication made to you by a member of Congress, authorized by the President—the substance of which is, that the President wished to coerce a social intercourse between your families and Mrs. Eaton. I see the Globe denies it. I have thought it barely possible that the allusion could be made to me, because if I had ever communicated such an idea, I should have done the most palpable, gross, and wanton injustice to the President; for he disclaimed, on all occasions, any right, or desire or intention, to regulate the private or social intercourse of his Cabinet. The President had been induced to believe that a part of his Cabinet had entered into a deep laid scheme to drive Major Eaton from his Cabinet, and of this he complained. I did not believe it, and, as the mutual friend of all concerned, I proposed that I should have the opportunity to converse with that portion of his Cabinet before he had an interview with them, and he acquiesced—and the interview which I had with you, resulted, as I understood, in a better understanding, and in fact I considered it a reconciliation. Whatever came from me, upon the subject of a social intercourse, was the suggestions of my solicitude to restore harmony among friends. My object was peace and friendship. I have never considered myself at liberty to say any thing about this interview except to a discreet and confidential friend. I certainly should not think any of the parties justified in representing for publication or newspapers, what any of the other parties said, without submitting such statement for mutual examination; for the plain reason that such conversations are so easily misunderstood. I may well remember what I have said myself, but may not so easily represent what you have said, or intended to say. I have not myself seen the necessity or propriety of any allusion in newspapers, to our interview, which was among intimate and bosom friends, where the conversation was free and unreserved, and for the object of peace and friendship. But if any should consider it necessary, then the great object should be, to state the conversation correctly, for there can be no motive to misunderstand the facts. For fear that allusion should have been made to myself; as the member of Congress, and believing it barely possible that I may have been misunderstood on the particular point alluding to, I have felt it my duty, and due to that perfect friendship which has ever existed between us, to make known these views, that the proper correction may be made, as a misunderstanding, without the necessity of any formal publication from either of us, and without even a disclosure as to what member of Congress allusion was made.

Sincerely and truly your friend,

RICHARD M. JOHNSON.

Messrs Ingham & Berrien,
City of Washington.

The absence of Governor Branch has been the only cause why this letter was not also addressed to him.

Mr. Berrien to Col. Johnson.

Washington, 7th July, 1831.

Dear Sir:—Yours of the 30th ult. addressed jointly to Mr. Ingham and myself has been duly received. *I* have noted your view of the occurrence to which it refers, with a perfect disposition to meet you in the spirit of frankness and of good feeling, which is expressed in your letter. It is an evidence of my reluctance to engage in controversy, that *I* have abstained from going before the public, notwithstanding the multiplied misrepresentations with which the newspapers are teeming. *I* still desire to avoid this necessity—but as circumstances beyond my control may render it indispensable, *I* acquiesce with the less reluctance, in the interchange of recollections which you propose.

I am to speak of what occurred at the interview which took place between you, Messrs. Branch and Ingham, and myself, at my house. You had, as *I* afterwards understood, held previous conversations on the same subject with one or both of those gentlemen, but I was perfectly *unprepared for the interview, until the moment* when you announced its object at my house.—The impression made by your *annunciation* was such as not to be easily effaced from my memory. You began by expressing the friendly regard which you felt for those gentlemen and myself, and by stating that this was the motive for your interference. You told us that an impression had been made upon the mind of the President that a combination existed between Messrs. Ingham, and Branch, and myself, to exclude Mrs. Eaton from the society of Washington—that he was excited by this representation considering it as an attempt to wound him through Major Eaton—that the President had seen with pain the want of harmony among the members of his Cabinet—that he was determined to have harmony, and that his determination would be announced to us in the course of the week. You added that you had in the mean time sought this interview with the approbation of the President, from motives of regard for all parties. You mentioned, as circumstances which had contributed to produce this impression on the mind of the President that Messrs. Branch, and Ingham, and myself had successively given large parties to which Mrs. E. had not been invited—and while you disclaimed any disposition on his part to require an intimacy between our families and that of Major Eaton, you added, that he would in future expect that at least on such occasions as these large or general parties were given, that Mrs. E. should be invited. I replied to you that not having been previously advised of the conference with the other gentlemen, I must be considered solely responsible for what I was about to say. I then observed that I would not permit the President or any other man to regulate the social intercourse of myself or family—and that if such a requisition was persevered in, I would retire from office. You expressed your regret at the terms of this answer—and *I* remarked that it was indifferent to me in what terms it was conveyed, provided the substance was retained—but that from this I would not depart. I understood you to disclaim any intention on the part of the President to require an intimate intercourse between the families of Messrs. Branch, and Ingham, and myself, and that of Major Eaton, but to express with equal clearness his expectation that when we gave large or general parties Mrs. E. should be invited—and it was my purpose to deny altogether his right to interfere in this matter. The replies of the other gentlemen were, according to my recollection, substantially the same—but *I* shall enclose copies of your letter to them, and leave them to speak for themselves.

The impression which this conversation made upon my mind is clear and distinct; and it is not probable that it could have been effaced from my memory. My own disposition was instantly to resign my office. In consenting to retain it, *I* yielded to the opinions of those in whose judgment *I* had confidence, and to my sense of what was due to the interests of Georgia, at that particular juncture.

My remembrance of this conversation is moreover confirmed by a recollection of what occurred on my subsequent interview with the President, in which a particular reference was made to it. When he spoke of a combination between Messrs. Ingham and Branch and myself, to exclude Mrs. E. from society, I claimed, as matter of right, to know the names of the persons by whom such a representation had been made. He said the impression had been derived from the various rumors which had reached him, spoke of the parties which had been given by those gentlemen and myself, to which Mrs. E. had not been invited—and added that the reports against her were foul calumnies. *I* remonstrated against his having adopted an opinion dishonorable to any member of his Cabinet on mere rumor, but expressly declined to discuss the question of the truth or falsehood of the reports to which he had referred—telling him, that, without undertaking to decide whether they were true or false, it was my purpose merely to conform to the general sense of the community of which *I* had become a member; and that I could not be induced to change that determination. The decision of the President not to pursue this matter further, *I* understood at the time to have been produced by the representations of some of his most intimate personal friends.

Such is my understanding of the conversation referred to in your letter. *I* look to it as the origin and continuing cause of the distraction of the party, which has thus lost the means of doing much good which it might have effected. But *I* am not desirous to bruit it to the world. *It*, without imputing to me the alleged want of harmony in the Cabinet, my retirement is placed on the ground of the President's mere will, so far as *I* am concerned, it is well. *I* do not dispute his right to exercise that as he thinks fit; but, for the sake of my children, *I* will not submit to the continued misrepresentations of the public journals. The best legacy *I* have to bequeath them is the untarnished reputation of their father. *I* can easily conceive also, that a state of things may exist, in which a sense of duty to the public will compel me to speak. But *I* hope such an emergency will not arise.

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