

MAJOR LEWIS ON THE NOMINATION OF ANDREW JACKSON

BY JOHN SPENCER BASSETT

In the Ford Collection of the letters of Major William B. Lewis, in the New York Public Library, is a letter to Lewis Cass in which Lewis gives a long and specific account of the moves made in bringing out Jackson as a candidate for the presidency. This letter is undated, but the writer of it says that it was called forth by an allusion to Jackson's nomination in John Pendleton Kennedy's history of the Twenty-Seventh Congress. In no notice of Kennedy's career that I have been able to lay my hands on have I come across mention of anything by him with this specific title. But his "Defence of the Whigs By a Member of the Twenty-Seventh Congress" appeared in 1844, and the twenty-seventh congress came to an end in 1843, which is probably the work to which Lewis refers. The conclusion is that the letter was written after 1843. As there is an expression in the letter referring to Jackson as though he were alive I conclude that it was written in 1844 or in 1845.

Lewis's letter to Cass fell into the hands of Parton, and he quoted freely from it in his "Life of Jackson" (II, 14-23). Parton following the custom of biographers of his time, made some verbal changes in the letter, without altering the sense materially, and he omitted a considerable portion, probably on account of its length. The contents are so interesting that it seems worth while to have the letter accessible to students in its entirety.

The point of departure for Lewis in this narrative is a statement by Kennedy that the first suggestion of

Jackson for the presidency was in a letter from Burr to Alston, Burr's son-in-law, written November 20, 1815. Burr's authorship of this letter is not doubted, but Lewis says that it was not communicated to Jackson by Burr or anyone else. He also denies that there was truth in the statement that the anti-Jefferson republicans and a group of federalists united in 1815 to bring out Jackson. He is not unmindful of the famous correspondence with Monroe, which served as a means of drawing federalists to Jackson; but he points out that this attempt was not made until 1824, when the correspondence with Monroe was published. It is worth remembering, also, that this correspondence occurred within a few weeks of the inauguration of Monroe, in 1817 and could have had no influence on events of 1815, or even on the election of 1816. The correspondence took place a year after Burr wrote to Alston. All this Lewis points out in his letter to Cass, as appears in the letter, given below. He then goes on to give his own account of the announcement of Jackson's candidacy.

Nevertheless, it is true, Lewis to the contrary notwithstanding, that late in 1815 a considerable feeling existed for the nomination of Jackson and this was just the time that Burr wrote to Alston. On October 4, of that year, General Carroll wrote Jackson from Nashville as follows:¹

. . . During my late absence I had the pleasure of seeing many of the leading characters of the States of K.y Ohio and Penna. most of whom are solicitous that you should become a candidate for the next president. I was asked by many whether you would permit your name to be used or not but never having heard anything from yourself on the subject I was unable to give any answer. Mr. Baldwin of Pitts.g a lawyer of profound talents and great respectability is your friend, and is very solicitous on the subject; he informed me that he had no doubt of your success; that

¹The letters from which this and the two following extracts are taken are in the Jackson MSS, Library of Congress.

he had heard from many of the Eastern States who were favorably disposed towards you. When you have determined on the subject, I should (if consistent) be glad to know your views

October 24 Colonel Andrew Hynes wrote him in the same strain. He said:

I have but a few days since returned from Kentucky, and while there I heard your name often mentioned most respectfully, yet there are some who still pretend to be dissatisfied, because the same meed of praise was not bestowed upon the Kentuckians as was on the Troops of Tennessee. The portion of the discontented are so small that they form but a few black specks in the mass of the people. I was in Lexington when the Honl. Henry Clay arrived. There was great joy manifested on the occasion. His return was greeted by the most kindly welcome.

On my return, I stayed all night at Genl Adair's and he really appears very well disposed towards you. He spoke of you in an anxious manner, and said that he had little doubt with the proper management of your friends, that you might be elevated to the highest Office in the American Government. I do not know your sentiments or disposition on the occasion, and I know your delicacy will not permit you to speak or write about it, yet if the people of the United States should wish it you no doubt will acquiesc.

Whatever may be the present sentiments of the people of America, I will venture to pronounce they will be entirely swayed by the nomination of the caucus of members of congress at Washington and the broad field of Elective prerogative will be reduced down to the capricious opinions of a few men. I hope you will give a hearty response to all the kind attentions which may be paid you by members of congress. Altho' they may not be great men, yet they have power in the nation.

Colonel Anthony Butler, returning from the East encountered the same sentiment in the same region, and he was impressed in the same way with the possibility of electing Jackson, who at this time was on his way to Washington to consult with the secretary of war with respect to the reorganization of the army, and incidentally to meet certain charges which Judge Hall, of Louisiana, was said to have sent to the

government. Colonel Butler wrote, November 7, as follows:

The subject I wished to converse upon was no less important than who should be the next Presidt? On my way through Pennsylvania and Virginia I had numerous conversations with persons of the first consideration both for their talents and their standing in the Community, and I found a strong disposition manifested to run your Name for the Presidency. In those conversations some of which were held with Members of Congress, I heard no dissenting voice; to communicate these facts, was one object of the interview requested. And one other object, (and not the least important with me) was to use whatever influence I could have with you to induce you to stand a candidate if solicited to do so whilst you were at Washington City Our Country for some time past as you know has been unfortunately under the dominion of Men who altho' extremely well fitted for the calm of Peace were illy calculated to guide the affairs of the Nation in War. The war we have just concluded, has to be sure by a fortunate *tho' late selection* of leaders terminated honorably and gloriously for our Arms, yet the conduct of that war taken as a whole proves most strikingly the Proposition I laid down, of the unfitnes to rule us in time of War, either by providing means or an independent selection of instruments best calculated to secure success, and cover the Nation with Glory. The state of affairs in Europe call upon us to be prepared in every emergency, and requires most especially that a Man should be placed at the head of our Government, whose firmness and Judgment in deciding on measures, and whose boldness in execution, would unite the Nation around him: Every man in the U. S. looks to you as this individual, and whatever might be your private wishes on this subject you would owe it to your Country as a Patriot, not to refuse the station if offered to you. I have written you upon this Topic lest my Journey to the City should be so long delayed as to prevent me from offering the suggestions of my mind, untill the time was passt: I feel no doubt that the affair will be mentioned to you very shortly after your arrival, and if it be I pray you in the name of our Country pause and weigh well the subject before you refuse the tender¹

There is no evidence to show what Jackson thought of these suggestions. His correspondence at the

¹This letter was indorsed by Jackson as follows: "The recpt to be acknde and the contents will be duly considered."

time is scant, and I have seen no letter by him in reply to either of the letters from which the above extracts are taken. It is, however, a good guess that the group of men who were trying to bring out Jackson found, when congress met, that the caucus was for Monroe and gave up the scheme at that time. It was revived in the beginning of the campaign of 1824, and for that movement the statements of Lewis in his long letter to Lewis Cass are more valuable than for the events of 1815. Lewis was by no means the head of the men who made Jackson's candidacy possible. He was warm of disposition and had Jackson's confidence; but he had little standing with the Tennessee politicians, and was intellectually not a man to influence policies. Patronage was more to his capacity. His letter to Cass is as follows:

[WASHINGTON, 1844 or 1845]¹

D. SIR,

Some few years ago you requested me to inform you when Genl. Jackson was first spoken of for the presidency and in what way he was finally brought before the country as a candidate. I promised at some not very distant day to comply with your request, as far at least as my knowledge of the matter would enable me to do so. This conversation with you however had entirely escaped my recollection and would not perhaps have been thought of again, had it not been brought to my mind by reading a pamphlet the authorship of which is ascribed, and justly I believe to the Hon. Jno. P. Kennedy, purporting to be a history &c of the 27th Congress. Mr. Kennedy in this work speaks of the influences and persons by whom Genl. Jackson was originally brought before the nation as a candidate for the presidency and in doing so falls into very great errors as I think I shall be able clearly to show—at least to your satisfaction.

My acquaintance with Genl. Jackson has been of more than thirty years standing. It goes back some two or three years anterior to the declaration of war against England in June

¹Ford MSS, N. Y. Pub. Lib.

1812, and from that time to this our relations have been most intimate and confidential, and without intermission. Under such circumstances it must be supposed, therefore, that few persons, if any, would be more likely than myself to be apprised of a movement of such political importance from its very inception to its consummation.

Mr. Kennedy maintains, in his pamphlet that Genl. Jackson was first thought of for the presidency by Aaron Burr, and was finally brought out thro' his instrumentality. This opinion of Mr. Kennedy is made to rest upon a letter from Col. Burr to his son in law, Gov. Alston bearing date the 20th Nov. 1815.¹ I cannot deny that such a letter was written by Col. Burr, because I have seen the original in his own handwriting; but I do deny that it was ever sent to Genl. Jackson, or its contents communicated to him by either Burr, his son in law, or any other person. If Mr. Kennedy really thinks it was, as we are led to infer, all that I can say is he labors under a great mistake. I venture to assert that there is not a man living of respectable character who will say so, speaking of his own knowledge, or who can produce any written testimony proving such to be the fact.

I have no hesitation in saying that Mr. K. is equally mistaken in what he says in the following remarks.—“This was the first movement (still speaking of Burr's letter to Gov. Alston) of the Anti-Jeffersonians to find a leader—make a new dynasty. With the Anti-Jeffersonians that portion of the Federalists, who were still militant combined. Genl. Jackson was applied to: a secret negotiation was set on foot. How far he acquiesced may be gathered from his subsequent conduct. This is certain, the pear was not ripe in 1815 &c” “Genl. Jackson from that hour was the candidate of *these combined forces.*” Here Mr. Kennedy means the combined forces of “Militant Federalists and Anti-Jeffersonians.” This is all speculation on the part of the Hon. Gentleman—mere *imagination.* If any such combination as is here spoken of, were ever entered into I will venture the assertion that it was unknown to Genl. Jackson. Confident I am that no

¹This letter is reproduced by Parton in his “Life of Jackson,” ii, 351. See also Davis, M. L., “Memoirs of Aaron Burr,” ii, 433.

application was ever made or negotiation entered into with him, for any such object by any such combination as is here asserted by Mr. Kennedy.

Mr. Kennedy next adverts to a letter by the Genl. to Col. Monroe, president elect dated Jany., 1817, to prove that "Genl. Jackson and the Federalists were in harmony" with each other.¹ He adds "He was a soldier; greeted with lavish honors by all sections of the country; by all classes of society, by all political parties. He was, therefore tolerant and full of good feeling to all men; and especially kind to all those of the Federal party who had sustained the war and who had gone into the ranks." Mr. Kennedy closes his remarks upon this letter in the following words—"Now with a man so endowed, so circumstanced, it was obvious that the Federalists might redeem their lost honors and even win the absolute supremacy in affairs. Such of them therefore as coveted office entered heartily into the plan and Genl. Jackson was thus dedicated by them to the contest of 1824." This is a very *plausible* story and tersely told; but after all, it is *mere fiction*. Mr. Kennedy either did not know, or if he did had forgotten that Genl. Jackson had been brought out and presented to the nation as a candidate for the presidency by the Republican party long before his letters to Mr. Monroe had been published and, of course, before the Federalists could have known of their existence. If any reliance can be placed in Mr. Kennedy's account of the manner and circumstances under which he was presented to the people as a candidate, or rather, "dedicated to the contest of 1824," it had been resolved upon as early as November 1815 when Col. Burr wrote his letter to Gov. Alston which was 12 months *before* Genl. Jackson's letters were written! The truth is the General never did, at any period of his life, belong to the Federal party; nor was he ever to use Mr. K's own words, "in harmony" with them. He was a man of liberal and tolerant disposition, naturally, but I can testify that before and after the war with England he uniformly maintained, in his conversations, republican or indeed I might say, *democratic* principles. It is not likely,

¹On the Jackson-Monroe correspondence of 1816-1817, see Bassett, "Life of Jackson," i, 339-342, and Parton, "Life of Jackson," ii, 355-371.

therefore, that he would enter into a combination with the Federalists for the purpose of destroying the Republican party. But to make out a combination still more clearly between Genl. Jackson and the "Militant Federalists" Mr. Kennedy introduces into his book (I should have said *Novel*) an extract from another letter of his to Mr. Monroe dated 12th Nov., 1816, which is preceded by the following remarks of his own—"It is said that his letter to Mr. Monroe, Nov. 12th, 1816 was, in fact written for him by a distinguished Federalist of that day. By whomsoever written, the sentiment it utters is worthy of a great man, and Genl. Jackson's adoption of it does him honor." Thus, it would seem, that a complete understanding must have existed, according to Mr. Kennedy, between the Genl. and the Federalists, *previous* to the 12th Nov., 1816 as on that day we are told a distinguished Federalist was so far in his confidence as to be called on by him to write a most important and highly confidential letter to Mr. Monroe the president elect! Yet Mr. K. takes the ground in his previous remarks, that it was *this very letter* and the *one of the 6th Jany., 1817*, which induced the Federalists to adopt him as their candidate for the purpose of overthrowing the republican party and getting rid, forever, of the Virginia Dynasty!

I fully agree, however with Mr. Kennedy in what he says of that celebrated letter. "The sentiment it utters is worthy of a great man"; but I deny positively that there is the slightest foundation for the insinuation of its having been written *for him* by a distinguished Federalist of that day. I *know* this to be untrue; for the letter was written at my residence in the vicinity of Nashville, and was not seen by any one with the exception of the General and myself until it was received by Mr. Monroe. In fact it was copied by me, at the General's request, and sent to Mr. Monroe in my handwriting. The truth is I was so struck with the noble sentiments it breathed that I took an extra copy of it to be put upon my own private files with the intention, should I out live the General to place it in the hands of his future biographer.

This letter was not published until May, 1824, and was

then brought out by the instrumentality of Mr. Walter Lowerie at that time a senator from Penna. to whom it seems Mr. Monroe had read it. It was denied at the time, by Mr. Monroe's friends, that he had seen it but of that there is no doubt I think. It was shown, or read, to him and his colleague, Mr. Findly, for the purpose, as I believe, of reconciling them to the appointment of Mr. Adams as Secretary of State¹. Mr. Lowerie, who was a devoted friend of Mr. Crawford, the caucus candidate for the presidency, took advantage of the knowledge he had thus acquired of the existence of such a letter to force its publication, under the belief that it would ruin Genl. Jackson in the estimation of the republican party, and especially in Penna. where his popularity was bearing down all opposition to him. In this, however, he reckoned without his host. Its publication, so far from injuring, undoubtedly greatly benefited the General. The noble, manly, and elevated sentiments which it contains, exalted him still higher, as they should, in the estimation of all honest, brave and patriotic men.

Candor, however, requires that I should admit, as I freely do, that the publication of this letter, together with that of the 6th Jany., 1817, had the effect of rallying to the support of Genl. Jackson many of the Federalists, particularly that portion of them who supported the war and *hated John Quincy Adams* for having turned Traitor to his and their party. But in making this admission I must not be understood as countenancing, in the slightest degree, the charge which Mr. Kennedy has labored to establish of a combination between him and the Federalists. It must be borne in mind that the publication of these letters did not take place until May 1824, about six months only before the presidential election, and could not, therefore, have been instrumental in bringing about a combination which, according to Mr. Kennedy, must have been consummated some five or six years before, if at all!

That these letters, where published, must have had a powerful effect upon that portion of the Federalists named above,

¹Lewis is in error so far as the appointment of Adams is concerned. See Bassett, "Life of Jackson," I, 341.

I can readily imagine from my own personal observation in relation to several individuals, who had always belonged to the federal party. I will name one. A friend of mine, a distinguished and leading Federalist of No. Carolina, was spending a few days with me in the summer, or fall of 1823, and in our conversations upon political subjects I found he was quite undecided as to which of the presidential candidates he would support. I pretty soon discovered, however, that he was bitterly opposed to Mr. Adams whom he spoke of as a *damed Traitor* but he said nothing that induced me to believe he was favorably inclined towards Genl. Jackson tho' they were, and had long been personal friends. Upon the whole I thought his leanings were rather in favor of Mr. Crawford, but not by any means definitely so. After conversing with him the previous evening, upon these subjects, I determined to make an experiment upon him the next morning with Genl. Jackson's letter of 12th Nov., 1816, and accordingly got the copy of it I had kept, before I went to bed, and laid it upon my table. I arose early the next morning and finding my friend already up and taking a walk in the garden, I sallied forth, and on approaching him handed him the General's letter, begged him to read it and tell me what he thought of it. He took it, gave it an attentive perusal and then addressing himself to me, with an air of incredulity enquired if Genl. Jackson had really written such a letter to Mr. Monroe? Certainly, I replied. And actually sent it? Yes, I again replied. Lewis, you are quizzing me he said. No, I assured him, I was not. Upon this his countenance became animated with joy and delight, and he replied, then *he* is my man for the presidency—"Henceforth, from this very moment, until the election is over will I give him my cordial and zealous support." He returned shortly afterwards to No. Carolina, and took a decided and energetic part in the contest—rallied *his friends* under the Jackson Banner and, in conjunction with a large and zealous portion of the democratic party succeeded in carrying the State by upwards of 5000 majority over the regular Caucus candidate, Wm. H. Crawford.

Who was this friend, me thinks I hear you ask? It was no other than General William Polk, of Raleigh, who, on account

of his high military services in the revolutionary war, his energy of character, his moral worth, and great wealth, was one of the most distinguished and influential men in the State. Altho' the Jackson men triumphed in No. Carolina yet their candidate was defeated. My gallant friend, however, nothing daunted again buckled on his armor and continued the conflict until complete success crowned the efforts of himself and friends in the election of General Jackson in the autumn of 1828.

But, my dear Governor, let us turn from the romancing of the Hon. Mr. Kennedy to sober realities—from *fancy sketch* to the undoubted historical facts of the times, and the *case*, to which he refers.

When Genl. Jackson was fighting the battles of his country and acquiring for himself and it, imperishable honors and glory, he never once thought, as I verily believe, of ever reaching the presidency. He did not dream of such a thing—the idea never once entered his imagination. All he aimed at, or desired at that time, was military renown acquired by patriotic services. This he prized far above all civil fame, and does even now, if I know any thing of the feelings of his heart. He was naturally and essentially a military man—Full of ardor; of indomitable courage; possessing the rare quality of inspiring every man about him with feelings as enthusiastic and dauntless as his own; quick to conceive and as prompt to execute; vigilant, and of untiring industry; and in addition to all these high and noble qualities he was endowed with a sound judgment and discriminating mind. In fact he had all the requisites of a great military commander and, with the same theatre to act upon, he would not, in my opinion, have been inferior to any of the great Captains of either ancient or modern times. This you may consider extravagant but I assure you I do firmly and conscientiously believe that by Nature he was not, as a military man, inferior to either Alexander, Julius Caesar, or Napoleon Bonaparte and had he occupied the place of either, under like circumstances, he would not have been less successful or distinguished!¹

¹For Van Buren's comparison of Jackson with the Duke of Wellington see Van Buren's *Autobiography* (edited by Fitzpatrick), p. 464.

With these feelings and views—thirsting for military fame, and ambitious of being distinguished as a great commander—it is unreasonable to suppose that *civil* honors were but little coveted, or cared for by him. No, my friend, he did not even dream of the high civic destiny that awaited him and which was to be the crowning glory of his life and character. The first suggestions of that sort came from Kentucky and were made, in the summer of 1815, by an officer who was under his command and assisted in the defence of New Orleans. (Mr. Livingston too, about this time suggested the same thing.) The letter of this officer was addressed to a third person, a mutual friend, who enclosed it to Genl. Jackson was as undoubtedly expected by the writer. In this letter it was proposed that he should forthwith be brought out as a candidate; but the General laughed at the idea and, returning the letter to his friend,¹ begged that nothing further would be either said or done in relation to the matter the proposition was too absurd, he said, to be entertained for a moment. In fact nothing further *was* thought or said, as I believe, upon the subject of his being a candidate, until about the close of Mr. Monroe's first term. Thus *began* and thus *ended*, the first movement in favor of bringing out Genl. Jackson for the presidency. Col. Burr, I am well assured, had no agency in this, for it occurred some three months, I should say, before the date of his letter to Governor Alston; nor was it put in motion by any combination of Militant Federalists and Anti-Jeffersonians.

As long as Genl. Jackson remained in the military service of his country, little was said about bringing him out for the presidency. Having been appointed Governor of Florida by the President of the United States, he resigned his commission in the army about the first of June 1821 and repaired, forthwith, to Pensacola to receive that Territory from the Spanish authorities. After organizing a territorial government and putting it in operation, he withdrew from all public employment and returned to Tennessee where he expected to spend

¹The letters cited in the beginning of this paper are in the Jackson Collection and certainly were not returned to the writers. Jackson's indorsement on Col. Butler's letter shows that he did not treat the suggestion as lightly as Lewis, writing twenty-nine years later, seems to have thought.

the balance of his life as a private citizen. Nor indeed was it believed by his friends that they would be blest with his society very long, as his health was at that time, and had been for six or seven years previously, very feeble and his constitution apparently exhausted and broken down. No sooner, however was he become a private citizen and had set himself down once more upon his own beautiful estate, the Hermitage, than the eyes of his fellow citizens were turned towards him as having eminently entitled himself by his brilliant and patriotic services to the highest honors within the gift of a free and enlightened people.

In Tennessee, and particularly at Nashville his friends began now to speak of him as a candidate and, in *good earnest* to take the necessary steps to place his name prominently before the country. It is true that some four or five candidates were already in the field, but so confident were they [i. e., Jackson's friends] of Genl. Jackson's strength and popularity with the people, on account of his great public services, they had no fears for the result. They not only, therefore, began to *speak out* upon the subject, but to make their wishes and intentions known also thro' the public Journals. The first demonstration of this latter method of supporting him was made January 1822, in one of the Nashville papers. Soon afterwards the Editor of the "Nashville Gazette," Col. Wilson, took the field openly and boldly for the General as his candidate for the presidency. The proposition was cordially responded to by the people of Tennessee, and was also well received in other states—particularly so, in the democratic and patriotic state of Pennsylvania. The inquiry now was in what way shall his name be presented to the nation? The most imposing manner of bringing him forward and presenting him to the other states of the Union, it was finally agreed would be by the Legislature of his own state. This would not only give weight to the nomination, it was believed but would show to the whole country we were in *earnest*. It was determined, therefore, that the necessary steps should be taken to bring him forward at the next session of the legislature.

In *these* preliminary movements it appears to me you will be scarcely able to perceive any agency on the part either

of Col. Burr, or the "Militant Federalists" of whom Mr. Kennedy speaks. Nor had the officers of the army whom he also represents as taking an active and leading part, any thing to do with them. The truth is, they were the voluntary and spontaneous acts of his Tennessee friends, without the suggestions or promptings of any person or persons out of the state.

About this time, Spring of 1822, I left home on a visit to North Carolina to see the family of my father in law, Gov. Montfort Stokes who was then a Senator of Congress. The Governor had always belonged to the democratic party and was one of its prominent and most influential leaders. His friendship and political support was, therefore, considered a matter of importance by those who were seeking favors at the hands of the people. What were *his* predilections at that time in relation to the presidential aspirants, I knew not, but, as you may well suppose, I felt anxious to inlist him on the side of Genl. Jackson. He had not got back from Washington at the time I reached his residence but returned soon afterwards. During my continuance at his house I had frequent conversations with him upon political subjects, and found him a warm personal friend and admirer of Genl. Jackson, but he gave not the slightest intimation that he preferred him for the presidency. This occasioned me some uneasiness, for I thought it a matter of very great importance, as it regarded the General's success in North Carolina, that he should have the support of the Governor. I determined, therefore, to have a full and frank conversation with him before I left, upon the subject; and it was not long before I had an opportunity of doing so, and learning his opinions and views without reserve. He frankly remarked to me that so little had, as yet, been said about Genl. Jackson, as a candidate, he had not supposed it was seriously intended to run him, and asked me if such was really the intention of his friends? *Unquestionably*, I replied— and added that the Legislature of Tennessee would certainly nominate him at its next session. What support do his friends expect him to get, he enquired, if nominated? I answered, they expect him to be supported by the *whole* Country. Then, he *facetiously* replied, he will certainly be elected.

Assuming then a graver air and tone, he said to me that he had known Genl. Jackson from boyhood, he having read law with his brother when quite a youth, and that there was no living man he so much admired, on account of his brilliant and patriotic services; but, being already committed to the support of Mr. Calhoun, he could not advocate his election. This was very unwelcome news to me, but I cannot say that it was altogether unexpected, for I was led to anticipate something of the sort from his silence, as regarded his preference, in my previous conversations with him. I then remarked, but suppose Mr. Calhoun should not be a candidate cannot you support the General as your next choice? Yes, he promptly replied, with great pleasure; but added, at the same time, he had no reason to believe that any thing could, or would occur to prevent his being a candidate. Under such circumstances this was all I had a right to expect, or ask—and I parted with the Governor, when about to leave for Tennessee, fully satisfied that in case Mr. Calhoun should not be a candidate, he would go for Genl. Jackson. In this I was not mistaken. The moment Mr. Calhoun was withdrawn by his Pennsylvania friends, the Governor rallied upon the General, and supported him with great energy and zeal. Having now the support of both Genl. Polk and Gov. Stokes, the two leaders, I may say of the Federal and Democratic parties in No. Carolina, his friends became confident of being able to carry that State for him. They were not mistaken. Its vote was given to him by a large majority.

I returned to Nashville about the first of June and found the friends of the General in high spirits and sanguine of success. Indeed this feeling was not confined to Nashville. It pervaded the whole state. Under this state of things the Legislature met and, in a few days thereafter, the 20th July, 1822, adopted a preamble and resolutions which placed the General before the country as a *legitimate* candidate for the presidency. Being now formally nominated, his friends, in every section of the Union, entered into the contest with increased vigor and energy. But few of the Federalists, however, took any part in it, until after the publication of the General's celebrated letters to Mr. Monroe. They were

published in May 1824, as before stated. Indeed but few of them, if any, knew of their existence until then, tho' they, it has been alledged, had won *their hearts* as early as 1815-16. I should, however, except Genl. William Polk to whom I showed the letter of the 12th Nov., 1816, in the autumn of 1823, as before stated; and perhaps John Quincy Adams also, to whom Mr. Monroe, I have no doubt, showed both letters, which accounts, to my mind at least, for his having sustained the General in his Seminole campaign with so much ability and zeal, in his dispatch to our Minister at Madrid.

The General being now fairly out as a candidate, it was considered indispensable, in order to make his success the more certain, that the congressional caucus system should be broken down. This was an Engine of great political power and had been used by the *politicians* of the country for twenty years, in *manufacturing* presidents, and unless it could be destroyed it would be difficult to overcome its influence upon those who had so long looked upon *its nominees* as the only true and legitimate party candidates. With a view to accomplish this object, Judge Overton and Heywood, both able and distinguished lawyers, opened a heavy and effective fire upon it in a series of well written numbers which were published in the Nashville papers. These, with the attacks made upon it in other quarters, added to Genl. Jackson's great personal popularity, contributed greatly, doubtless, to the overthrow of that renowned personage "King Caucus," as it was then derisively called. It is true he mounted his throne again in the winter of 1823-24, and nominated, as Mr. Monroe's successor, Mr. Wm. H. Crawford, but his majesty had become powerless, and his nominee, for the first time was badly beaten. This was the last time he ascended his Throne, having died soon after of the wounds he received in the campaign of 1824, and has never been heard of since. Not even his ghost made its appearance in the presidential contest of 1828! It strikes me that you will be equally at a loss to perceive, in all this, any agency of either Col. Burr, his militant Federalists, or Anti-Jeffersonians!

As Tennessee was almost unanimous in favour of Genl.

Jackson, it might have been supposed that his friends would have had little or no trouble in that state after his nomination. Such, however, was not the fact. Col. John Williams had been a Senator from our State in Congress for eight years, and as his time of service expired on the 3d of March, 1823, the Legislature, which met in October of that year, had to elect a new Senator. Col. Williams was a candidate for re-election; but being a personal and political enemy of Genl. Jackson, it was determined, if possible, to defeat him, unless he would pledge himself to the support of the General for the presidency. This he refused to do having already engaged to support Mr. Crawford. The Genl's friends had no alternative left them but to beat him and this was no easy task. East Tennessee claimed the Senator, and the Col. was a great favorite with the people of that end of the State. Besides, with the view of strengthening himself in other sections, soon after the elections in August were over, he mounted his horse and rode through the whole state, calling on the members elect to the Legislature and obtaining promises from most of them to vote for him. They should not have thus committed themselves, but having done so, the greater part of them were disposed to redeem their pledges, tho' admitting they had done wrong.

The most devoted and zealous of the General's friends were determined, however, to leave no stone unturned to defeat his election. Several persons were spoken of as opposing candidates, but none of them could obtain, it was ascertained, the requisite number of votes to elect them. The General's old friend, Johny Rhea, could come the nearest, but he lacked *three* votes. This was a very unpleasant state of things. To elect a bitter personal enemy of Genl. Jackson, and one who was known to be in favor of Mr. Crawford for the presidency, would have a most injurious effect, it was believed upon his prospects. Notwithstanding he had been nominated by the Legislature some fifteen months before yet it was apprehended, if an enemy of his should be sent to the Senate it would be difficult to make the other states believe that Tennessee was in earnest in her support of him. It would certainly have the appearance of great inconsistency

and well calculated to nullify the effect of his nomination. This could not be permitted and it was resolved, *at all hazards*, to defeat the election of Col. Williams.

It became necessary, now, to play a bold and decisive game, and as nobody else could be found to beat the Colonel, it was proposed to beat him with the General himself. This, being made known, produced great uneasiness and alarm among the more timid members, from an apprehension that even he could not be elected; but Mr. Eaton and myself, who were on the ground, took upon ourselves the responsibility of the step and insisted on his being nominated to the Legislature as a candidate for the Senate. We came to the conclusion that if the General must be politically sacrificed it mattered little in what way it was to be done, whether by being defeated himself in the election of a U. States Senator, or by the election of his bitter personal and political enemy! But *I* had no fear of his being defeated—I did not believe it possible that a majority of the members would be willing to take upon themselves the responsibility of voting against him. He was, accordingly, nominated to the Legislature by Major Maury, a highly respectable member from Williamson County—and he *was elected*, as I anticipated, *by quite a large majority!* Had he been beaten it might possibly have destroyed, or at least impaired his prospects for the presidency; but his defeat, it was believed, would not be more blasting in its effect than the election of Col. Williams under all the circumstances of the case.

These are the reasons, my dear Genl., which induced the friends of Genl. Jackson to send him to the U. S. Senate in the winter of 1823-24 and which, as it was thought by many of his friends at the time to have been rash and impolitic, I embrace this opportunity of explaining to you. The General himself was far from desiring it, but there was no help for it, and he submitted with a good grace. He was a soldier and knew how to obey as well as to command! It is proper, however, to state that the members of the Legislature who were in favor of electing Col. Williams declared themselves to be decidedly the friends of Genl. Jackson, but they maintained that to support the latter did not make it necessary to sacrifice

the former. The active and most decided of the General's friends, however, differed with them in opinion: *they* had no doubt that to sustain Col. Williams, under such circumstances would be injurious to the prospects of the General for the presidency.

But, after all, the friends of the General were disappointed. No election was made by the people, and the Ho. of Representatives, upon which the right of choosing a president from the three highest candidates devolved, chose Mr. Adams. Yes, Genl. Jackson altho' he got much the largest electoral vote and was evidently the choice of a Majority of the people, was passed over by the House and a *minority* candidate placed in the presidential chair! How, by whom, or with what motive this was done, it is not necessary for me to say, as it is now a matter of History, and undoubtedly well understood by the whole country. His defeat, however, so far from damping the ardor of his friends, only excited their indignation and aroused them to still greater exertions in his support—believing as they did, that the people had been cheated out of their choice. The decision of the House, therefore, was no sooner known than he was proclaimed, by the papers which had supported him previously, as a candidate for the presidency at the next election. Indeed the Jackson Banner was again unfurled and seen waving in the breeze before ever Mr. Adams had delivered his Inaugural address.

In the canvas of 1824 very little had been said about the General for the reason, perhaps, that he was not considered a formidable candidate. The result of the election, however, opened the eyes of his opponents and revealed to them his strength; and, at the same time, their own danger. They soon therefore, opened their batteries upon him with a fury and vindictiveness never before witnessed in this country with the hope of destroying his character and fame in the estimation of the people. The flood-gates of abuse and billingsgate were not only opened upon him, but the vilest and most infamous slanders were published in the administration papers against his wife, one of the most benevolent and pious of women. One of the newspapers which took the lead in these infamous

attacks upon the reputation of Mrs. Jackson was the "National Journal" published in this city, and which was said to be the especial organ of President Adams himself. Of this I believe there was, and is, no doubt. So well satisfied of it was Genl. Jackson at least, that he refused to call on him, as it was thought in courtesy he should have done, when he reached Washington in February 1829. *This was not his opinion. He thought* that a man who would permit a public Journal, which was under his control, to assail the reputation of any respectable female, much less the wife of his rival and competitor for the first office in the world, was not entitled to the respect of any honorable man, and he would not, therefore, go near him, and he has not spoken to him from that day to the present moment. *This* was the reason why he did not call upon him and not from a want of magnanimity, or a sense of what was due to the chief magistrate of the Nation, as it was alledged by his enemies at the time.

Under this state of things, and with a view of defending the characters of *both* against the attacks of his enemies, his friends of Nashville saw the necessity of taking immediate steps and a public meeting of the citizens was therefore called, at my instance¹ for the purpose of taking into consideration the best and appropriate method of accomplishing this object. At this meeting the following preamble and resolution were adopted.

(From the Nashville Banner of the 21st March)

"Meeting in Nashville.

"Agreeably to previous notice, the citizens of Nashville and its vicinity assembled at the court house in this town on Saturday last, for the purpose of taking into consideration the propriety of appointing a committee to correspond with

¹The following footnote by Lewis appears in the letter: "The following is the notice referred to—The citizens of Nashville and Davidson County are requested to meet at the Court House, in the Town of Nashville on Saturday the 17th Inst. (March 1827) at 2 O'Clock P.M. for the purpose of taking into consideration the propriety of appointing a committee to correspond with other Jackson committees, in the several states, upon the subject of the next presidential election.

"It is evident that every effort is making by falsehood, slander, and detraction to defeat, if possible, the election of our fellow-citizen the favorite of the Nation. To counteract these Machinations, it has become necessary to establish a correspondence between those who are intimately acquainted with the public and private character of Genl. Jackson and his friends and supporters in other sections of the Union."

the Jackson committees in the several States upon the subject of the next Presidential election.' The weather was unfavorable, but a considerable number of persons attended.

"Col. Edward Ward was appointed Chairman, and Nelson Patterson, Esq., Secretary.

"After a few appropriate introductory remarks by the Chairman, and an animated and eloquent address by William L. Brown Esq. the following preamble and resolution, offered by the latter gentleman, were adopted *nem. con.* and the blank was then filled with the names mentioned therein.

"This meeting believes the present to be a conjuncture when every honest and just exertion should be employed to promote the election of that great and honest man, Andrew Jackson, to the Presidency of the United States, and that to make those exertions most efficient, a committee should be organized whose duty it will be to frame and publish an address to the people of the United States, such as may be best adapted to effectuate the great object in view, and whose further duty it will be, as occasion may require, and so far as within their power, 'to detect and arrest falsehood and calumny, by the publication of truth, and by furnishing either to the public or to individuals, whether alone or associated, full and correct information upon any matter or subject within their knowledge or power,' properly connected with the fitness or qualifications of Andrew Jackson to fill the office of President of the United States.

"Resolved, Therefore, that John Overton, Robert C. Foster, George W. Campbell, William L. Brown, John Catron, Robert Whyte, Thomas Claiborne, Joseph Philips, Daniel Graham, William B. Lewis, Jesse Wharton, Edward Ward, Alfred Balch, Felix Robertson, John Shelby, Josiah Nichol, William White, and John M'Nairy be selected to compose the committee."

This committee was composed of some of the ablest and most distinguished citizens of the State whose duty it was as stated above, to vindicate the reputation of Genl. Jackson against the malignant attacks and foul calumnies of his enemies. With the character and standing of the most of these gentlemen you are well acquainted. I will remark,

however, that Jno. Overton, the Chairman, George W. Campbell, W. L. Brown, Robert White, and John Catron had all occupied seats upon the Bench of the Court of Appeals, the highest court in the State, and the last named is now one of the Justices of the Supreme Court of the United States. So well, and so *efficiently* did this committee discharge its duty to the General and the country, that it soon received, from the enemies of General Jackson, the cognomen of the "*Whitewashing* Committee." It successfully and triumphantly defended his character against the charges of inhumanity and a blood thirsty disposition in having had six militia men shot, during the last war with England, for desertion; and of being concerned with Col. Burr in his treasonable designs against the U. States. Nor was it less successful in defending the reputation of Mrs. Jackson against the *fiendish* attacks upon *her* by those worse than demons in human shape.

This second effort of the General's friends, in running him for the presidency, proved more successful than did the first, notwithstanding the great and unceasing exertions that were made to deprive him of the confidence and affection of his fellow-citizens. He was elected by an overwhelming majority of the electoral college and the *people*, and was installed into office on the 4th March, 1829. With regard to what has since transpired, in connection with his administration, no one knows better than yourself, having been five years a member of his cabinet.

I have written you, my dear Governor, a long letter, and one which I fear, you will not find very interesting. If so, you have yourself to blame for it, as it was at your own request I promised to write it. I offer it to you, however, such as it is, with the best wishes of very truly,

Your friend,

WILLIAM B. LEWIS.

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