

## James B. Gardiner to Andrew Jackson, March 22, 1831, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

### NOTES SENT TO JACKSON BY C. B. GARDINER.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This paper was sent to Jackson by Gardiner with a covering letter dated Washington, Apr. 2, 1831.

March 22, 1831.

The following is the substance of a conversation held by Mr. Ingham with me this day.

There was a feeling prevailing, which rendered it difficult to do business here at this time. *He* had taken no part in the existing collisions, and found he had quite enough to do, to attend to *his own* official business. He had told Gen. Jackson, long ago, that his Department required his whole attention, and that *he* shoul[d] not have time to intermingle with the *political* affairs of the Administration.

“ *Something* was wrong *somewhere* ; and there was much discontent and bad feeling. Much of the present difficulties had grown out of the *early measures*. He never saw the propriety or necessity of many removals; nor of some *strong measures* , adopted solely on the ground of Gen. Jackson's personal popularity. He had asked them, what was the *use* of encroaching upon the popularity of Gen. Jackson. If it were strong, (as it undoubtedly was, *at that time* ,) it was best, not only to keep it so, but to *increase* it by all conciliatory measures.

For his own part, *he* had no reason to complain. Congress had sustained *him* in all *he* had done, or asked. The reason of this, he supposed, was, because he had taken a

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quiet course, attending only to his own duties, and not participating in the quarrels or *prospective* views of others.

Ohio was not only debateable ground, but *worse than that now*. Pennsylvania was little better than debateable *now*, but he would not “*sign an insurance*” for her another year. She had much state pride; and plumed herself a good deal upon the fair and humane manner, in which she had acquired her territory from the aborigines—not by cutting their throats and murdering them, as most of the other states had done; but under the peaceable negotiations of William Penn. It was therefore that she took the stand which she did, on the *Indian question*. If such of her members as voted against the Indian bill last winter, had turned a somerset, and went entirely over to the enemy, as Stanberry did, they would have been re-elected by increased majorities, as he was. Some of them, who attempted to recant, or palliate their course, had been *beaten*.

Local feelings will, and generally ought to prevail. And the foolish attempts made here, to array the constituents of a member against him, because he did not pursue such a course as pleased *some here*, always had recoiled upon the Administration. Congress would think for themselves; and would not be *scolded* into measures. It was always better to *conciliate*, rather than *irritate*. When members complained of this thing and that, and were told that the *popularity of Gen. Jackson* would sustain it; they naturally became more tenacious of their own power, and less inclined to yield to the wishes of the President. No man's popularity ought to be a shield for a wrong measure. No earthly possession was so uncertain as popularity. Even Gen. Washington lost *his*, towards the close of his Administration. There was a majority of two against him in Congress, on a vote relative to the correspondence preceding Jay's Treaty. Gen Jackson was *yet* popular, but *no one could tell what two years had done, or what two years more might bring forth*. He would not endorse *even for Pennsylvania* for that time. He would not *sign a policy* for New York for 99 per cent. New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio, under the new census, could settle any question of power, in the union, *if united*. The non-slaveholding states *ought*, and *would*

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be united. For 34 years out of 42, we had been governed by slaveholding Presidents. He did not object to a fair reciprocity; but the odds had been too great on one side.

The anti-masons, to a man, were against Gen. Jackson. They acted foolishly in making their principles so strictly a political test. They lost their Governor in New-York by *that* ; and in Pennsylvania, last fall, they did not effect as much as they might have done. If they would not *avow* that they supported a man on the *particular ground* of his being an anti-mason, they could be *equally united* in his support, and gain support for him from *others* at the same time.

There was to be a “tremendous meeting” in Philadelphia. Hemphill was to be placed at the head of it. It would have a powerful effect. Hemphill had become very warm. He had been a true friend of Gen. Jackson, and could forgive him every thing else, but the danger in which he had placed the Bank of the United States. Pennsylvania would not rest easy on that subject.

If the meeting at Baltimore should take up Mr. McLean, instead of Mr. Clay, he would *give us more trouble than any other man!* The Clay men were not very warm for *him* in Pennsylvania. They took him in preference to Gen. Jackson as a *choice of evils*. The case would be very different with *McLean* in Pennsylvania. The *methodist Jacksonians* in that State, (who were very numerous) would support him to a man, *and so they would everywhere*. Of the anti-masons doing so, there could be no doubt; but if they supported him *ostensibly* on the *main ground* of his being an anti-mason, they would not do him as much good as they could, if they united, and *agreed to leave that out of sight*. McLean was highly esteemed in New-York. In Ohio there was no kind of doubt about him. *The Clay men would prefer him, or any one else* , before Jackson. In Pennsylvania the Quakers and methodists, *in a body* , would go for McLean, and a *great many Presbyterians*.

The power of *sympathy* among the people of the United States was, perhaps, as strong as any other feeling. They would not look on with indifference and see *one friend* crushed and

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trampled in the dust, to gratify any present or *prospective* views of *another*. Pennsylvania knew Mr. Calhoun to be a strong and sincere friend to Gen. Jackson. *She called him her son; and would not see him sacrificed.*

He did not think Mr. Calhoun desired to be a candidate; because he had thought Gen. Jackson ought to serve a second term. His reputation was dearer to him than the Presidency.

The people had not yet looked to the question of a successor to Gen. Jackson. They did not wish to do so; but if they think we are divided here among ourselves, they may tell us all to go about our business. No *divided* Administration could be a successful one. At this time it was doubtful whether Gen. Jackson had a majority with him in Congress. And how is a President to effect, even the most salutary measures, without the cooperation of Congress?

Gen. Jackson may *possibly* get Pennsylvania; but it would be a *hard battle*.

Gen. Jackson would now be elected; but great changes might take place in public sentiment in two years. All depended upon the future course of the Administration.

He could not tell *why*, but it seemed to him that some men *would become popular*, without either *general* or *specific* causes. And others would *lose their influence*, without a *visible* dereliction of duty. Some how or other, *Mr. McLean's* popularity was *like a ball rolling in the snow*. [Here it was observed that *snow would melt* in a *southern* clime.] He said “an *avalanche* would last many years.”

Too much anxiety to *retain* their places, had greatly tended to facilitate the downfall[!] of the *last* Administration—(Adams and Clay). He hoped *this* would be more prudent. No public man ought to desire to remain in office, longer than the people *voluntarily* approved of his

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acts. The people will not be *forced* ; and *it is unsafe to substitute personal popularity for public utility.*