

Andrew Jackson to James Monroe, January 6, 1817, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

TO SECRETARY MONROE.¹

¹ This letter is a draft in Jackson's handwriting. Comparison with the copy published in Parton's *Jackson* (II. 366) shows that every idea in it was Jackson's and contradicts Parton's assumption that Maj. W. B. Lewis was the real author of the letters to Monroe. A copy of this letter, addressed to the Secretary of War, exists in the War Department files. At that time Monroe had been out of the War Department for more than eighteen months, and Jackson had written many letters to Crawford, his successor in office.

Nashville, January 6, 1817.

Dear Sir. I have the pleasure to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 14th Decbr. last, which I have perused with great interest and much satisfaction.

your Ideas of the importance of the late acquired Territory from the Indians is certainly correct, and all the importance you attach to it, will be realised, The sooner these lands are brought into market, a permanant security will be given to what, I deem, the most important, as well as the most vulnarable part of the union. This country once settled, our fortifications of defence in the lower country compleated, all urope will cease to look at it with an eye to conquest. There is no other point of the union (america united) that combined urope can expect to invade with success,

On the other subjects embraced in my letter as well as this I give you my crude ideas with the candeur of a friend, under a recollection of the old adage, that the Bee may suck honey from the mire. I am much gratified that you received them as I intended, It was the

Library of Congress

purest friendship for you individually, combined with the good of our country that dictated the liberty I took in writing you. The importance of the station you were about to fill to our nation and yourself—The injury in reputation that the chief magistrate may sustain from the acts of a weak minister—the various interest, that will arise to recommend for office their favourite candidate—and from experience in the late war, the mischief that did arise to our nation and national charec[tor] by the wickedness or weakness of our war minister,² induced me, to give you my candid opinion, on the importance of the charector that should fill this office. I had made the most extensive enquiry, from the most impartial sources, for the most fit charector, possessing virtue talents honor and energy, and all united in the Individual named, I am fully impressed with the propriety as well as the policy you have pointed out of taking the heads of Departments from the four grand sections of the u states, where each section can afford a charector with equal fitness—but where that cannot be done I think the executive is entitled to have the best talents, when combined with other necessary qualifications that the country can afford regardless of the section of country that hold them

² Meaning Armstrong.

I have read with much satisfaction that part of your letter on the rise, progress and policy of the Federalist. It is in my opinion a Just exposition—and I am free to acknowledge, had I commanded the military Department where the Hartford convention met, If it had been the last act of my life, I should have hung up the three principle leaders of the party, I am sure an independant court martial would have condemned them under the 2nd section of the act establishing rules and articles for the goverment of the army of the u. s. These kind of men altho called Federalist, are really monarchrist, and traitors to the constituted Goverment. But I am of opinion that there are men who are called Federalists, that are honest, virtuous, and really attached to our Goverment, and altho the[y] differ many respects and opinions with the republicans still they will risque every thing in its defence. It is therefore a favourite adage of mine, “that the tree is known by its fruit,” experience in the late trying war has taught me to know, that it is not those who cry patriotism loudest

Library of Congress

who are the greatest friends to their country, or will risque most in its defence. The Senate of Rome had its Sempronius, america has hers, and when I see a charector with a manly, honest, firmness, give his opinion, but when overruled by a majority, fly to support the Eagles of his country, meet every privation, and every danger, for a love of country and its security I care not by what name he is called, I believe him to be a true american, worthy the confidence of his country, and all good men. Such charectors as this, will never disgrace themselves, or do an act injurious to their country. Such is the charector given to me of Colo. D—and believing in the recommendation, I am and was confident, he was well qualified, to fill the office with credit to himself and benefit to his country, and aid you in the arduous duty of the station a gratefull country has called you to fill. I will Just add, names are but Bubbles and some times used for the most wicked purpose. I will name one Instance I have once upon a time been called a Federalist. you will smile when I name the cause, when your country put up your name in opposition to Mr. M. I was one of those who gave my opinion, that on the event of war, (which was then probable) you would be my choice, every person knew I Esteemed Mr M. as one of the best of men and a great civilian, but I always believed, that the mind of a Philosopher cannot dwell upon blood and carnage with any composure and not well fitted for a stormy sea. I was for these Ideas unhesitatingly denounced as a Federalist. But I trust that Judging the tree by its fruit, it was unjustly ascribed to either. To conclude my Dear sir, my whole letter was predicated, to put you on your guard against american Semproniuses, that you might exercise your own Judgt. in the choice of your own ministry—By which, you would Glide smothly through your administration with honor to yourself and benefit to your country. This was my motive, This the first wish of my heart—to see you when I am in retirement, endeavouring to nurse a broken and debilitated, constitution—administering the Goverment with the full approbation of all good men persuing an undeviating course alone dictated by your own independant matured Judgment.