

## Andrew Jackson to Thomas Cooper, August 24, 1818, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

1 Copy. Thomas Cooper (1759–1839), the agitator and scientist, was at this time professor of chemistry and mineralogy in the University of Pennsylvania.

Nashville, August 24, 1818.

Confidential

*Sir*, I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your very friendly letter of the 31st ult.

For the friendship which you have maintained in the defence of my conduct during the late Southern Campaign, please accept my thanks. I have not the pleasure of knowing you personally but have often heard you spoken of by your friend Col. Hays and, particularly, as a proper person to write the history of my life.

From this circumstance I have formed a high opinion not only of your talents but of your moral rectitude. confiding therefore in your integrity, and reposing great confidence in your honor as a gentleman, I have herewith enclosed you a copy of the order under w[h]ich I acted at the time I entered Florida, 2 also copies of the letters addressed to the commanding officer at St. Marks, and the Governor of Pensacola. 3 On the result of this order, you will find that you have been drawn into an error in the peice which you wrote for the Democratic Press, 4 by following the article published in the National I[n]telligencer.

2 Dec. 26. 1817; see vol. II., p. 342.

3 See *ibid.* , pp. 355, 356, 373, and *Am. State Papers, Mil. Affairs* , I. 712.

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4 John Brims' paper, Philadelphia.

All of the prohibitory orders referred to by the writer of that article were given to Genl. Gaines who then commanded in that quarter. On reading the enclosed order to me of the 26th Decr. you will find, that it has no reference whatever to the prohibition orders above alluded to.

The order to me explains in substance most of the orders previously given to Genl. Gaines, but there is no reference to the one which required him to halt before a Spanish garrison, should the enemy retire on it, nor is there the *slightest* intimation of such a wish in any of the orders, under which I acted. Surely then, had it been the intention of the government that I, in carrying into effect the order to Genl. Gaines, it would have referred specifically to it. No such reference is made, nor was I required in any of orders to respect the Spanish Authorities. I was required to put a speedy termination to the war, and in doing that was of course, to exercise my own discretion, having an eye to the main object of my order, which was expressed in general terms.

Finding that the Spaniards identified themselves with the Indians, inciting, aiding and comforting them, and admitting them into their garrisons, I discovered that the legitimate objects of the campaign could not be accomplished nor the conflict expeditely terminated, but by annoying their fortresses, and thereby depriving the Indians of the supplies which enabled them to [carry] on the War.

This I conceived to be justifiable according to the established and well known usages of nations.

The continued hostilities of the Governor of Pensacola from 1813 to my entering and possessing both the City and Barrancas by an American force, plainly proves that the conflict with the Indians never could have been ended so long as they were permitted to retire into Pensacola as a place of safety, there to be protected by the Spanish Authorities,

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there to be supplied with provisions and ammunition and other implements of Warfare, and from them issuing forth to massacre our defenceless fello[w] citizens.

The facts stated in the letters to the commanding officers at St. Mark and the Governor of Pensacola, may be relied on as strictly correct, and can whenever it may become necessary be subs[t]antiated by abundant and unimpeachable testimony. I thought at the time, and still think, that the circumstances justified upon sound principles, the taking and garrisoning of them with American troops, policy and humanity both required it to be done.

Being a sincere friend of Mr. Monroe and his administration, it is not my desire to do an act that would be calculated in its tendency to injure him, unless impelled to it in my own defense. Whenever that period may arrive, if it ever shall, I will enter into it with the feelings of a citizen, and the candor of a Soldier. Had the government held the posts until the guarantees were given, stipulated in the Articles of capitulation, 5 things would have terminated greatly to the benefit of my Country, whose happiness and honor alone I had in view, in the course I have taken. if this had been done, I would have been more than willing to have taken upon myself all responsibilities, but when my country is to be deprived of all the bennefits resulting from my acts, I will not consent to bear upon my shoulders, responsibility that ought to rest upon those of another.

5 See vol. II., p. 398.

My situation is a delicate one. I must for the present be silent. this communication, with the accompanying documents, therefore is made to [you] in confidence, and for your satisfaction only.

You must consider it as unofficial and use it in that light. I must request that you use it with great caution. Upon the receipt of this I shall be happy to have your private and candid opinion.

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I have the honor to be Very Respectfully Yr. obdt. svt.