

West Street Georgetown. D. C. 14<sup>th</sup> Decr. 1823.

To James Monroe,  
President of the United States.

Sir,

From the Complacency you exhibited in recognizing my weather beaten Visage, a few Days since, when I had the Honor to accept you on the Public Promenade near your Residence, I am inclined to flatter myself you will recollect that I had heretofore the gratification to serve our Common Country under your immediate auspices both Abroad and at Home: in both those Tours of Public Duty, I had the satisfaction to receive unequivocal indications of your approval and amicable Regard. The long Series of Misfortunes & Disappointments which has since overshadowed me, may perhaps, have obliterated in your Memory the Public Service in which I had been previously engaged at the Request of that revered Patriot and Statesman, Thomas Jefferson, when he was Secretary of State of the United States.

Having, unfortunately, outlived almost all the Friends of my early Life, I am now become an isolated Being, nearly unknown and unnoticed in the Crowd of more active Citizens, who surround me and obstruct my feeble approach to the Threshold of the Cabinet: I hope, therefore, that, without accusing me of Coarctation you will suffer me in this way to tell you a plain & unvarnished "state of other Times"; which, although it must unavoidably exhibit a tincture of Egotism, shall bear the Stamp of Truth!

At the early period above indicated, — during the Presidency of General Washington, — I was sent abroad, with some Confidential Communications from our Government to its Ministers at London and at Paris; accordingly, I visited both those Cities; and then, under similar Orders, repaired to Lisbon, to join Col. D. Humphreys, then Minister of the United States at the Court of Portugal; I was expressly authorized to assume the Quality of "Secretary of Legation", and to accompany him on a special Mission to the States of Barbary. If our Negotiations had proved successful, it was left at my option to remain there in the Quality of the Representative of the United States. At that moment the Barbary Powers refused us a safe Conduct to their shores!

In this infructuous pursuit, I underwent great Corporal Fatigue in traversing the rude, rugged Roads of Spain from Gibraltar to Allicant, Madrid, &c. and incurred much personal Expence that the allowances of Government could not reimburse me.

After that abortive Enterprise, I resumed my private Pursuits, until I had the Honor to serve another Tour of Public Duty under your Personal Superintendance at Paris. You were then & there pleased to approve of my appointment in Quality of "Secretary to the Commissioners there Convened under the Louisiana Treaty."

More recently, when an insolent Enemy was at the Door, and you condescended to take charge of the arduous Administration of the War Department, under the Presidency of Mr. Madison, you found me at the humble Post in that Division of the National Service, where I had been employed during several preceding years; and where, in obscurity, I have ever since held the noiseless tenor of my way. At several periods, your apparent approval of my assiduous application to the Duties assigned me, has sustained my Hopes, and stimulated my Exertions.

Since your well-merited Elevation to the highest Dignity which your grateful Country could confer, I have, at a respectful Distance, contemplated with peculiar pleasure the happy Results of those judicious measures pursued with undeviating assiduity during your firm and vigilant Administration. Although I have not often been seen in obsequious attendance at your public Levees, yet I pray you to be assured that I have not the less sincerely cherished a high Esteem and Respect for those eminent Talents and Virtues which your public Transactions have ever elicited, and which your more intimate Friends have uniformly admired, — in Public, as well as in the Privacy of social Intercourse.

Such

1823  
Nat. Library

*[Faint signature and circular stamp]*

such has been the peculiarity of my perplexing situation during the whole Presidency of W. Madison, as well as since, that I have been induced quietly to acquiesce with apparent cheerfulness in the partial distribution of the secondary Grades of Employ on the Departmental Scale; and to receive with thankfulness the very inadequate remuneration that has been from time to time awarded me for my unremitting exertions in those Sections of the War Department which have been confided to my Superintendence: but I will assert in all the sincerity of immaculate Truth, that no consideration of Self-Interest has ever induced me to become Remiss or Negligent in the performance of my Public Duty.

It has fallen to my Lot to engage in an arduous and thankless Task: when the Section of Military Bounty Lands, was first confided to my Care by William Custer, then Secretary of War. I found its Business a Chaos! Where due Form and Order had previously been wholly neglected. For example: the important Register of Land Warrants issued, was inscribed on a few vacant Pages of an old Book of Locations, that was furnished from the General Land Office, Treasury Department, after the Conflagration of the War Office, in the year 1800. There was not a Letter Book appropriate to this Branch of Service: it appears that my Predecessors in Office were in the habit to scribble off such Correspondence as the current affairs of the Day peremptorily required; and after obtaining to it the signature of the Secretary of War, it was copied into the General Letter Book of the War Office.

I flatter myself that the utility of the organization I have introduced into the Office under my Superintendence, will bear the test of scrutiny: Successive Secretaries of War during the last fourteen years, have honored it with their approbation, so far as they have respectively made themselves acquainted with its principles. Moreover, they have uniformly authorized me to carry on the requisite Correspondence, relative to this Branch of the War Department, under my own signature. Now and then, indeed, a decision on some controverted point of Law, has required the sanction of the Secretary's signature, to preclude further discussion; but probably, this necessity has not occurred ten times in course of the Administration of any one Secretary of War, during the period of my Public Service abovesaid.

Thus, apparently honored with the Confidence of the Higher Servants of the Republic, I have, during nearly fifteen years, uniformly performed the Duty of "Auditor of Claims for Military Bounty Lands". During about seven years of the same period, (as nearly as I can recollect) the Business of the Pension Office was superadded to my other Functions; but without acquiring for me one Cent additional compensation; as may be seen, I presume, by an inspection of the Records of Expenditures in the War Office during that period. By a more judicious organization, the Business of Pensions now constitutes a separate Section of the War Dept; and the Gentleman who conducts it, has the same Salary as is allowed to me for the Section of Bounty Lands!

During the seven years that I had charge of those two Branches conjointly, and without any Assistant, my whole Stipend averaged about twelve hundred dollars per ann. My Remuneration has since been gradually augmented, like that of the other subordinate Clerks in the War Dept. (and the highest amount that has ever yet been allowed me, is sixteen hundred Dollars per ann. while a first Clerk in each of the Treasury Auditor's Offices, is allowed seventeen hundred doll. per ann.!

As for the Auditors of Public accounts, four of whom were created by the Act of the 3. March 1817, they are by Law allowed the decent Salary of \$ 3000. per ann. respectively: which is not an extravagant compensation for the due exertions of such Talents and Integrity as their important

important Functions require.

I confess myself ignorant of the amount of Claims against the United States that either of these Auditors have sanctioned within any given year: I know that during the period elapsed since the termination of the late War, the number of applications at my Office has been immense! Nearly 27,000 Claims have been allowed under the various modifications prescribed by Law. I cannot readily state how many Claims of the same Classes have been rejected during the same period: the latter, however, often cause more Labour and Research than those which are granted. If a fair Estimate of the Value of these Territorial Grants was made, I am inclined to think the amount would go far towards ~~meeting~~ an Equality with that of the pecuniary demands adjusted by either of those four Auditors, within the same period: how disproportionate, then, are our respective Remunerations! At this moment of general pecuniary pressure, I hope I shall be pardoned for pressing to state to you this comparative view of the Mediocrity of my Public Stipend in quality of Acting Auditor of Claims for Military Bounty Lands.

If, Respected Sir! your Patience has sustained the Perusal of the foregoing correct Representations, I feel confident that you will not blame me for indulging the Hope that, in the plenitude of your Civil Authority and Moral Influence, you will be pleased to consider my unfortunate Case, and will afford me such Relief as Equity and your own liberal Feelings may suggest! I do not solicit a sinecure; but I ask to be employed in some Grade of Public Service which would justify an equitable augmentation of Salary, and wherein I feel confident in my ability to render a "quid pro quo".

An old Adage says, "Beggars should not be Choosers". Yet, at my time of Life, and considering the portion of it which has been consumed in Public Service, all the Remuneration for which has vanished, and like the Bracelet Habit of a Vision, leaves not a Wrack behind, I venture to hope you will not be offended if I indicate that if you think proper to advance the Commissioner of the General Land Office to some higher Public Trust than either of the places he now holds, I would willingly, although with diffidence, undertake to administer the Affairs which appertain to the General Land Office of the United States.

Or if either of the Auditors of Public Accounts should "Fly off in a Tangent to Heaven," or otherwise vacate his Place, I think I may, without arrogance, assert that its Duties are within my competence.

I have been given to understand that the Place of Navy Agent at New York would soon be vacant: should that Case occur, I beg you will do me the favor to recollect that many years of my early Life were devoted to Marine Concerns, both Abroad and at Home: and give me leave to say that it would give me peculiar pleasure to render the knowledge relative to Naval Construction & Equipment which I then acquired, useful to the Naval Establishment of my Country!

I have no friendly Advocates to second my pretensions, and weary you with solicitations in my behalf; but I feel the fullest confidence that your discernment & sound Judgment will do justice to those abilities which, I have the vanity to believe, might still prove serviceable to my Fellow Citizens.

With sentiments of the highest Esteem and most profound Respect, I have the Honor to be,

Sir,

Your very humble & obedient servant,

J. Nat. Cutting.