

Andrew Jackson to James Gadsden, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

TO JAMES GADSDEN.1

1 Library of Congress, Donelson Papers.

Washington, November, 1836 (?).

Dear sir, your letter of the 26th Octobr. is recd. containing the unpleasant news of the retrograde movement of Genl Call for the want of supplies.² It is true that the whole Florida war from the first to the present time has been a succession of blunders and misfortune, as the movement had been made ahead of the supplies. (when there had been so much ordered) and the withlacooche reached, Powells camp and supplies discovered, he ought to have been reached, defeated and his supply of corn etc., obtained to have foraged and sustained our troops until their own supplies could have been had. Why this was not done must be for those who had the immediate command to explain—every thing at present is wrong but I hope the energy of major Pierce³ will soon put the Troops in motion. I sincerely regret the fate of Lane⁴ —he had acted rashly and without orders, left the post where Genl Jessup expected to find him, disappointed in not finding and defeating powell he had got into a false position and could not get back as I suppose to his post, was mortified and destroyed himself in a moment of despair as I suppose.

² The Seminole War lasted from 1836 to 1842. It grew out of the attempt to induce the Seminoles of Florida to remove west of the Mississippi in accordance with the treaties of Payne Landing, 1832, and of Fort Gibson, 1833. The Indians fled to the swamps in defense. General Scott was sent with troops to subdue them but did nothing, and he

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was recalled. Gen. R. K. Call took command, awaiting the coming of Scott's successor, General Jesup, who arrived in December, 1836. His attack on the Indians in the Wahoo Swamp drove them before him but he did not pursue for want of supplies. The leader of the hostiles was Powell, a half-breed son of a white man, but better known as Osceola, which was his Indian name. The vigor of Jesup brought the Indians to an agreement to remove. They began to assemble at Tampa to embark for the West. Then came the attempts of white slaveholders to rescue out of their numbers the numerous slaves who had long lived and intermarried with the Seminoles, and all the peace plans were broken up. The Indians fled to the swamps and five years were spent before their resistance could be ended piecemeal.

3 Benjamin K. Pierce, major 1st regiment U. S. artillery.

4 John F. Lane, captain 2d U. S. dragoons.

you remark "had you received an answer to your letter at Greenville a force if required could have been had ready organised etc., etc.?what force. I had given orders for the volunteers to be raised under the act of Congress in Georgia, Alabama, Florida and Tennessee. this being done and apportioned, my power ceased, until a report of them was made when I was to organise them etc. Genl Call was requested when charged with the command, to call you to his aid as quartermaster General, that as you had a knowledge of the country, had been with Clinch and Scott your services would be important. by the act of congress I had no power over the officering the militia. I have tried all the Generals and as Genl Jessup is now there and in command, he I hope will finish this unfortunate business. the reason your Greenville letter was not answered, it had reached here, was sent on to Tennessee by Col Earle, received in the hurry of business and confusion of company and not answered, but as you remark there cannot be need [of] more men, that there are as many in Florida as might eat Powell and his few.

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5 Gen. Duncan L. Clinch, who was in command at the battle of Withlacoochee, Dec. 31, 1835.