

Andrew Jackson to Louis McLane, March 8, 1831, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

TO LOUIS MCLANE.1

1 Library of Congress, Donelson Papers. McLane was minister to Great Britain 1829–1831.

Washington, March 8, 1831.

Confidential

My dear friend, The letter written to you by Mr. Van Buren at my table spoke fully my feelings and wishes towards you. But I trust that the nature of our relations excludes the necessity of professions. You have served your country faithfully and successfully, and as far as it is in my power to prevent, it shall not be ungrateful to you. Although I was well aware that those who did any thing, but rejoice in your success, would raise a clamour at your return, I had nevertheless determined, sensible of the reasonableness of your request, to grant you permission to return in the spring, and Mr. Van Buren wrote you to that effect. When I did so, my hopes were that I would have it in my power to do something that would be satisfactory on your arrival, stronger than Mr. Van Buren expressed them. It gives me pain to say that a due regard to existing circumstances, and a respect for all interests that merit consideration have interposed obstacles to the gratification of my wishes in that respect which makes a postponement of them nearly impracticable. But that is not the principle inducement for what I am about to say to you, for I am satisfied you would be content to await circumstances, knowing well that no proper opportunity would

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be left unimproved. I have said you have served your country faithfully and successfully, and to those who do so their country may naturally look for support in public exigencies.

We are yet without information from Mr Prebble and have no accounts of the result of his mission other, than what is derived from your communication, and the Public papers.² Taking them in connection with indications from Main, I apprehend that difficulties of no ordinary character may grow out of this affair. Should such be the case, I have had too much knowledge of your peculiar fitness for the station you occupy not to be sensible of the injury the public interest might sustain from your withdrawal, and I am confident the act would be disapproved by the people. Those, with several other considerations constrain me to require your continuance at London for one year more, or at least to fall; or until circumstances may so change, as to justify a different course; in which event, you may rest assured that they will not be suffered to pass unnoticed. I am sensible of the disappointment this will be to you, and I think you know me too well not to be satisfied of the pain I experience in announcing it. But I know also as well from my knowledge of your personal character, as from the Stock you are decended, that you will not stop to count the sacrafice, when it is your country which demands it.

you may happen to learn that on its being generally believed at the rising of congress that you were coming home, and indeed asserted that you were on the water, a hue and cry raised by the opposition about outfits and extravagance etc. etc. I therefore think proper to assure you that this circumstance has not entered into my considerations in deciding on the present course. I would not have made up my mind to have given you permission to return if I had not believed it to have been right, and thinking so, it is not my course to heed the clamour of those who are disposed to rail on whatever may be done. I think it due to you, that it should be known that you have requested permission to return, and that I have on public grounds felt it my duty to insist on your remaining at your post for some time longer.

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Repeating my regrets at the contents of this letter, and desiring to be affectionately remembered to Mrs. McLane and all her children, whom I expect to see at Washington at no distant day, and under more auspicious circumstances, I am D'r sir very respectfully yr friend

2 The reference is to the arbitration of the northeastern boundary by the King of the Netherlands. William P. Preble of Maine was our minister at the Hague.