

Henry Baldwin to Andrew Jackson, May 13, 1832, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

HENRY BALDWIN TO JACKSON.

Philadelphia, May 13, 1832.

Dear Sir, Since the receipt of Mr Lacoeks letter enclosed to you in my last I have received a duplicate from him which he authorises me to copy and send you. there can therefore be no objection to your retaining the one now in your possession.

I have reflected much and anxiously on the subject of putting interrogatories to Lacock; you have been deceived, betrayed, and possibly attacked, by a sett of men who sought your confidence merely to advance their own interest and ambition, and you know that with such men it is a practical rule in their political morals never to forgive the men they have injured. If you have not already had sufficient proof of this being their rule of action, I shall be much disappointed if many months elapse before it becomes most manifest; not only by the course of those who have been your open assailants but of others who have remained behind the curtain, rehearsing their parts preparatory to public exhibition.

Thus far you have made out a triumphant vindication of your own conduct in relation to them, your friends are proud of it, and the country has approved and will sustain it, but you have not done with the man who assailed you before the public of duplicity towards him. It is not enough for you to repel this charge on yourself only, you owe it both to your own character and to your friends, to retort and fasten the charge on him, by evidence which he cannot impair, and which no one will doubt: that evidence is not only in your power, but offered to you by a witness whose personal veracity is above reproach, who has stood

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towards you in an attitude in which no one can impute a personal or political bias in your favor. Tho he yet avowes himself to be your opponent in politicks he offers to do you justice in relation to a matter concerning which you have and ought to have an anxious desire that the public should appreciate your course, and correctly understand that of your enemy and accuser. His testimony is offered in writing in answer to interrogatories and you ought certainly to wish it so taken as to expose it to no objections which will weaken its effect, and give it the greatest possible weight in public opinion.

Your experience and observation have no doubt often led you to remark on the difference in the effect produced by a declaration, written statement, or deposition made in the presence of the opposite party, where he had the opportunity of explanation or cross examination; and where it is made *ex parte* without either. From mine and Lacoeks letters you are well informed as to the proper subjects of inquiry, and cannot be taken by surprise in the answer which will be given, no doubt in conformity with former statements. when this is done on notice to J. C. C. he can complain of no unfairness or secret means and Mr. Lacock will not be exposed to the imputation of having volunteered his interference in the controversy. The disclosure will be much more full than you could obtain in any other manner; the letter of Lacock to J. C. C. would be an unquestioned document of the greatest possible weight, from his having received it and by his silence admitted the correctness of its contents, and this can be had in no other way than the one proposed. You will observe that there is no restriction imposed as to the questions to be put, except such as may relate to "those not now before the public" and these are not your mark. There are no considerations which in my mind can balance these. Mr Lacock wants or expects no favor from you neither can he have any expectation of putting you under any personal obligation. he is now disposed to make a full statement in answer to questions of which a copy shall be sent to J. C. C. events may possibly occur which may induce him hereafter to be less willing when he finds his offer has not been accepted. He must now feel bound to make the required statement but hereafter he will not be so unless he is willing if there is already or should be any political coalition between Mr Clay and

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J. C. C. that may furnish a reason why Mr Lacock would be unwilling to furnish any statement calculated to injure the personal or political standing of the latter. Tho from the evidence already in your possession there can be no doubt of the nature and extents of the communications between him and J. C. C. on the subject of your confidential letter yet much of it must depend on inference and construction and you cannot expect to have the same means of nailing your accuser to the counter as you would have by an explicit [sic] definite answer in writing admitting of no doubt as to its meaning and extent. We both have good reason to know the course taken by him in the Senate on the Seminole war and that the whole correspondence was known to him. from his conversation with and his letters to me he must have conferred fully and freely with the other. You can have the whole authentically stated in the mode pointed out but cannot have it so full or satisfactory without it and your triumph may be less complete owing to your having omitted the means necessary to inforce it. Lacock may die and those who represent him be unwilling to have any reference made to his papers or correspondence on this subject.

I have taken the liberty of making these suggestions and urging them on your consideration in hopes that you will reconsider and change the opinion expressed in your letter. it is done solely from an earnest wish that you may [have] the best possible means of making out in your own favor and against your enemy not only a strong and conclusive case in your own favor but against him. There is in my opinion no man in the country who can furnish as powerful testimony as Mr Lacock¹ he is of all others the best possible witness you could expect to have.

¹ See the extracts from Abner Lacock's letter to Baldwin of Feb. 18, 1832, subjoined to Baldwin's letter of Feb. 27 (p. 411, *ante*). Jackson was not offended by a tone of frankness in Lacock's letter, which Baldwin read to him. "He told me to say", says Baldwin, writing to Lacock on Feb. 25, 1832, "that far from being offended at the frankness with which it was written he admired its candor and magnanimity and stretching out his long arm said, the nation shall be saved and tell Lacock so. There was no mistaking the tone, the emphasis, and the manner, it was beyond all cant, affectation, or hypocrisy." Baldwin then tells how

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he heard from Crawford the story of Calhoun's real attitude toward Jackson's Seminole campaign, and how he told Jackson about it in 1824; and he urges Lacock to write him as to his source of information on the same point. He believed he could draw out a statement that Lacock in 1819 had had from Calhoun a full account of the John Rhea letter. He closed his letter as follows: "If you think that the name of judge Baldwin should not be known to the public, you have the corrective by addressing your reply to the President directly. If you are willing that he should retain the letter of the 18th say so to him. I shall submit this letter to the President and write a postscript from the [Supreme] Court room."

I am very glad to hear that you are in good health and spirits

Yours with esteem