Washington Sept. 12, 1836

SIR,

I have been informed by the Secretary of the
Senate that he has apprized the Senators of his
intention to resign the office which he holds at
the commencement of the Session.

Although aware of the importance of the trust
to which I aspire, and the number, character & influence
of those, who will be solicitous to obtain it, I cannot
permit the occasion to pass away without offering my
name to the consideration of the Senate, in the appointment
of his successor.

The attempt, however, I feel assured, must be
useless, unless some of the enlightened members of the
body, whose suffrages I seek, can be induced to
consider the peculiar position in which I am placed,
and the grounds upon which I perhaps, might predicate
my humble pretensions. And, among all the members
of the body, I am induced to look with more confidence
favourably towards you than any other, not only as the Representa-
tive of the State where are stile my earliest and strongest
association, but from the certain conviction that you will
at least extend to my application a liberal indulgence.

It is known, perhaps, to many of the Senators that I
have spent the prime, and some portion of the vigor of
life in the performance, occasionally, of all the duties
of the Secretary's office. It is now nearly, twenty-six years
since, compelled more from necesssity than choice, I
reluctantly entered it. Even then I felt how greatly I
had hazarded prospects with which I had nourished a two
credulity fancy.

During this long period I have performed
labors to the utmost of my ability, the prevailing labors
of the office, and often others, in addition, by which
I hoped to acquire the good will essential to success.

During the greater portion of the last Session
I have been called, in consequence of the lamented
indisposition of Mr. McDonell, have occasioned the performance of the duties of principal Clark. The manner in which I have performed them must be left to the judgment of the Senate.

In entering the office, I was not wholly insensible to the claims which my friends, my family, and society had upon me. The care of relaxation from physical and moral labor, though not sufficiently improved, were not wholly misapplied, and I cherish the hope that, in time, even diligence and labor might qualify me to rise to a different sphere. Hitherto, however, these youthful aspirations have not been realized. In the lapse of a quarter of a Century a single advance in the line of promotion, (and even that unattended with any increase of pecuniary emolument) has alone contributed to animate effort, or allay the bitterness of blighted expectation.

To such, however, by the resignation of Mr. Lowrie, an incitement has occurred, which seems to show whether, when all the elements of society are instinct with activity and life, and wherever I turn my eyes, I behold the associates of my early and mature years enjoying reputation, acquiring wealth, and rising to eminence. I alone must maintain a stationary existence, and be content to end my days at the very point where manly effort first commenced.

In the position in which I now am, placed, two alternatives only are before me. If I decline to offer for the vacant office, after the devotion of so long a period to the unintermitting discharge of its incidental duties, some may attribute my conduct to pusillanimity, and others to a consciousness of incompetency or demerit. If on the contrary I apply, and fail, the prostration of all hope of future performance...
in the path I have chosen, will be the least painful
of the consequences of this decision by the Senate.
The duties of the secretary and those of his principal
assistant are not greatly dissimilar. Both should
preserve in an equal degree, the confidence of the
members: and either should be competent for
the event of absence, to perform the duties required
of the other. If then, when a vacancy stands just
before me, another should be preferred, could
I with unselfish honor and self respect, remain
in the secondary office longer than stern necessity
may enforce? Ought I not rather to infer that an
unfavorable decision by the Senate
was as applicable to both as one? I need not
anticipate an event which may so deeply
involve the prospect and happiness of those men
who have served the country above countenance
by their own efforts. The respect of all honorable
men, must forfeit the respect of all honorable men,
must forfeit the respect of all honorable men,
and, in time, become
inevitably incapable of many principles and generous
purpose as the lowest reptile of the Earth.
It may perhaps be said that the higher
officers of Government should be filled by those
who have some claim upon their country,
who have at least acquired, in other pursuits,
or who have at least acquired
an irreplaceable reputation. I can make no boast; for it has
never been my fortune to be placed in a sphere
where fame could be acquired. But perhaps
on this occasion, on the score of Service, I may,
be permitted to put in an humble state:
and which, if lost, would have replaced a safer
and more indelible disgrace than the burning of a hundred capital cities or the capture of every seaport city of our land.

It would be tedious and perhaps unprofitable to dwell on all the circumstances of an event too deeply impressed upon my memory ever to be effaced. Its prominent points, however, I write briefly. Early in the year 1814, I was induced to purchase a small farm, Mile, distant from Washington, not only as a means of relief from the perplexing monetary condition of a public officer, but to add something by additional labor to a narrow income. To this farm I removed my family. By this move I lost the right of domicile in Maryland. I was informed by the colonel of the Regiment in which I served as a colonel, that an objection had been made to the legality of my holding it and that therefore I must be deprived of the privilege of keeping it and that my name was then struck from the rolls of the officers, and after the issue of the order and a new one, the ground on which I stood was plunged in obscurity.

Thus I was deprived of military duty, and not Washington, except as a Voluntary. Whether enrolled in Maryland or not, I had been ordered to join the ranks of the Company. I had commanded to join the ranks of the Company in order to assist or to keep myself at liberty, which the officer might do in any duty, which the officer might do in any case of necessity in any case of necessity. The peculiar state of the officer indeed made me to their K. I could indeed me to their K. I could indeed to their K. I could indeed to their K. I could indeed to their K. I could indeed to their K. I could indeed to their K. I could indeed to their K. I could indeed to their K. I could indeed to their K. I could indeed to their K. I could indeed to their K. I could indeed
Transportation was either engaged or in use, and no certain intelligence of the enemy was either communicated or known. Some Executive Order was expected but none was given. No one appeared to give directions for the removal of the books and papers from the Capitol. The Venerable Secretary of the Senate, Mr. Madison, had recently paid the Debt of the Nation. The Principals of the City and County were absent. The responsibility of an erroneous decision was devolved on two young men, one of them, and recently appointed, unprepared for an emergency.

In this situation I suggested to Mr. McDonald the third day before the departure of the British that the property of the Office was to be taken care of. The responsibility of such a step was naturally expected to produce hesitation in me, but at 12 o'clock of that day, I expected him to come. He arrived about 1 o'clock and at once my increasing apprehensions, and the desire of immediate action, prevailed. He therefore prepared to proceed at once and take the proper action. I informed him of the Conversation I had had with the Waggoner of Schofield, and that no time might be lost, and so and that it was necessary to proceed at once. The Waggoner, however, informed me that he had left the papers in the hands of the Waggoner, and upon my reminding him of his engagement, he made no impression that an engagement had been made.

I immediately proceeded to procure the Waggoner, and immediately proceeded to procured the Waggoner, and upon my reminding him of his engagement, he made no impression that an engagement had been made.
length informed him that if he hastened no longer I must be compelled to use the power of impeachment. He yielded to this and declaration brought the Stores from the place in which they had been concealed, and accompanied me to the Capitol. In the morning of the 30th Mr. McDonald having departed from the Capitol for the purpose of making some arrangements for his family, I was prevented from seeing him that day. During the day, from being absent, I was much occupied with the aid of the messenger of the office, and the office was the place of the papers of the office are the Papers which I engaged in removing from the office. When the time was nearly setting, our vehicle for my residence in the country. In the way two unpleasant occurrences took place. Before we passed the boundary of the City one wheel of the waggon gave way; and when we were only two miles from the dwelling, the waggon was upset. The first was remedied by borrowing, without leave from the owner, a wheel from a Blacksmith's shop; but a delay of several hours occurred before we were able to recover from the second. About 10 o'clock of the second day Mr. McDonald joins me, and my residence was convenient for me. He conducted the waggon to the place where it was placed, and remained until a place was provided for the meeting of Congress.
proceedings of the Senate: And if I do not greatly mistake, they constitute at that time, the only evidence in existence of the executive doings and votes of the Senate during a period of twenty five years. The value of the files and printed documents, a love was in some measure discovered, during the recent compilation, of publications ordered by the Senate. But what would have been the the feelings of every intelligent individual, at home, or abroad, had the executive history of the Senate for a period of twenty five years, been blotted forever from the knowledge and memory of man.

It is far from my wish to arrogate to myself more than proper belongs to me. From the merit of Mr. McDonel I, as an efficient and valuable office, cannot of course, in the least detract. A train of provident circumstances, indeed, enabled me to procure perhaps the only conveyance which could have been obtained. All that happened to be saved was deposited in that conveyance and directed: and it is by my exertions and directions, and it is certain, if the impending danger had not been real, and the confidential papers proved of any real, of which I knew to contain the official one, of which I knew to contain the entire number and positions of the entire American military force, thus withdrawn, and from the place of legitimate deposit, and from the place, exposed in an open wagon or the Continence of a nocturnal transportation, been subjected by my means to damage, and loss, the full weight of responsibility...
would have fallen on me: the fact of my being the junior in the office, and receiving no absolute direction from a competent superior, would have been weighed; and the motive with which I acted would not have availed the withering scorn glances of an indignant public; eternal approbation would have rested on my name; and deprivation of office, with inevitable pecuniary loss, would have been the least punishment I could have expected to receive for an unauthorized removal of the Confidential Archives.

Hitherto, content with the approbation of my own mind and desiring no other reward, I have scarcely ever thought to utter a word in the fact of the transaction even to the ear of friends. If now, however, I have thought proper, it is on an unaccountable occasion to mention any circumstance which can properly operate in my favor.

Knowing your honorable and liberal sentiment, I have trespassed, I fear, most unreasonable on your patience, and disclosed my feelings with a fullness and unreserve which I would not hazard in a few words with any other individual, or with any other individual in a letter. The liberty of a personal intimacy after I take the liberty, alas! to encroach on which I have addressed to other Senators, and have addressed to you. I should consider myself highly honored if you, consistently with public duty, you could give my humble pretensions the weight of your support.

With the highest respect,
Yours ob. serv.

[Signature]

H. Machen