



QUARRELS.

PRESIDENT WASHINGTON, March 4, 1795, from Philadelphia writes to Col. Lear at Georgetown. The letter states in a prefatory way that he rarely writes personal letters when it interferes with public duties. It is a letter press copy and only a fragment remains and that is blurred, faded and eaten. By the closest scrutiny I deciphered so much as relates to Greenleaf, as follows:

An unlucky dispute has * to happen I find between the present commissioners * * * * * construction of the contract between the former Commifisioners & Mr Greenleaf.— From what I have learned, it is a question of some magnitude inasmuch, as establishing a principle of * to them, will have an extensive effect in favor of, or adverse to the public property in the City.—This being the case let me ask you, to collect the sentiments of the judicious about you, in the City & in George Town, as far as it is to be drawn from casual (* * from forced) conversations respecting the dispute & to inform me thereof.— * * * perceive that it is for *my own private* information, my request to you proceeds; both the request and answer to it will, of course, be confined to ourselves.

With affecte regard—Yr
sincere frd

MR LEAR.

GO WASHINGTON

Mr. Law to Mr. Morris, May 26, expressed his grievances and requested his interposition. Mr. Morris declined. Mr. Law had written the Commissioners evidently when he addressed them this letter :

TO THE HONBLE GUSTAVUS SCOTT AND WILLIAM THORNTON,
Commifisioners of the city of Washington

HON^{BLE} SIRS

As I have purchased several squares of Mefsr's Greenleaf, Morris & Nicholson, where they had the right of selection by their contract with the late Com-

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misioners, and as I wish to be secure in my title before I commence expenditures in improvement.

I trust you will readily acquiesce by erasing some of the squares South West of the intended Mall in Mr Notley Young's ground, and by inserting in their deed of conveyance some of the squares near New Jersey Avenue.

I mean to part with several lots on the New Jersey Avenue, on moderate Terms, with a stipulation for immediate improvement, & I have received applications with those conditions, but I am prevented from engagements until I receive a full title.

Your desire to promote the rapid advancements of the city will no doubt induce you to submit to a trifling trouble in an accommodation which will not make the least difference in your contracts. Should however your minds entertain any doubts on this head, I shall be favored by your reference to the President.

I remain yr

T LAW

WASHINGTON CITY
June 7th 1795.

To COMMISSIONERS.

CITY OF WASHINGTON, 10 June 1795

GENTLEMEN

As Mr Thos^s Law has purchased a large quantity of lands of me in the City of Washington & as I am desirous Mr Law should be perfected in his title so that he may be able to make immediate improvements and advancements in the City

I have therefore to request that you will accept a reconveyance of part of those lands of Mr Notley Young which you granted to me in fee simple & therefore to convey to Mr Law such a quantity of other lands in the City as Mr Law and myself shall agree upon, & such as Mr Law may take out of my selection. This request is made under a full persuasion that your compliance therewith will have a great tendency to the improvement & advantage of the City

I have the honor to be

With due esteem & respect

your very obt & most hble

Servant

JAMES GREENLEAF

Law's communications having been slighted he transmits copies with his letter to Greenleaf in which he inquires "Have I been wanting in respect or attentions—my style is not harsh my request not immoderate." Greenleaf took up the gauntlet for Law and waged a more aggressive and vigorous battle. Greenleaf the day before his first letter had entered into an agreement for the sale of his holdings. His financial interest was closed. He was under no legal and perhaps no moral obligation to protect Law. That he did so was a delicate distinction of honor.

The Commissioners quickly discerned that Greenleaf's attic story was more than so-so furnished. They realized also that

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when one goes out to fight and the foe is more formidable than expected, he can afford to be generous and let the foe have the field to himself. The letters are in sequence and need no further comment.

Sir

In obedience to your request that I would commit to writing what has been advanced by me in conversation with you on the subject of the federal City I now with all due respect do say that Messrs G. Scott & W. Thornton, Commissioners of the federal district, do possess property both in and near the federal City, on the Georgetown side of it; that I do most firmly believe that conceiving it to be for their *personal* interest to promote the benefit of that part of the City; to the detriment of the part lying on the Eastern branch, they do *designedly* and *intentionally* discourage every thing that may tend to promote the growth or respectability of this last mentioned part

I do further say that certain propositions have been made to those Commissioners by Mr Thomas Law for the improvement of the City and for facilitating the transfer of property to him with perfect security to the publick to neither of which he has yet rec^d reply, tho promised him—& that this alone prevents him from commencing very important improvements—and I do further say that governed by the conviction that the said Commissioners have constantly & will continue to oppose every obstacle to my operations in the City tending to the benefit of the Eastern part of it, & that they will withhold from me such facilities as the nature of the object requires, &c that can with reason & propriety be asked that I have been induced to divest myself of my whole interest in the City & to withdraw my personal exertions to the promotion of that establishment, except so far as regards the improvement of one Square for my future residence.

I have the honor to be with all possible respect

Sir

Your very obed^t & most humble Serv^t

JAMES GREENLEAF

Philadelphia July 11, 1795

EDMUND RANDOLPH Esq^r }
Secretary of State. }

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

July 15th 1795

GENTLEMEN

Justice to the two seniors of your board induces me to transmit to you the enclosed copy of a letter from Mr Greenleaf. He had stated the contents in conversation with me, I insisted that they should be committed to paper. He said that he would never hesitate to repeat in writing what he had orally uttered but was unwilling to enter into altercation with you, and proposed one or two expedients for avoiding a written communication. I explicitly informed him that he must either give me under his hand his charges against the commissioners or request me in writing Not to mention them to the president. The latter I should have considered as a retraction and would have disabled him from ever circulating, that he had advanced to me accusations which I passed over with notice.

But he has preferred the former. I have the honor to be gentlemen with great respect and esteem

Yr. mo. ob. ser.

THE COMMISSIONERS
OF THE
FEDERAL CITY.

EDM. RANDOLPH

GEORGETOWN July 20th 1795

SIR

Our Board never having been full till late last week your Memorial and Letter could not receive a final decision. the board have had these several days under consideration and now enclose you the result which they hope will answer your wishes.

Nothing can be more agreeable to them than to give every facility consistant with safety to the City funds to yours and every other purchasers title. They cannot conceive any thing more reasonable, than that when they part with the legal estate of public property they should have a security equally good to ensure the payment of the purchase money.

We are fir

With respect your mo obed^t servts

GUSTAVUS SCOTT
WILLIAM THORNTON
ALEX^R WHITE

THOMAS LAW Eq^r

GEORGE TOWN 20th July 1795

SIR /

We have the honor of your favor of the 15th Inst covering Mr Greenleafs extraordinary charge. Mr Laws businefs would have been decided upon last Saturday the second day after Mr White took his seat at the Board, but waited at Mr Whites desire for his further consideration until this day. The Resolutions which respect his several applications were early this Morning laid before the President and finally determined upon before 12 o clock at which early hour the Board rose having Signed the Letter to Mr Law and left the care of correcting the Secretarys Copy of the resolutions to Mr White. These facts are stated to show how unnecessary Mr Greenleafs charges were to induce us to do Mr Law Justice

The important nature of Mr Laws memorial and Letter led us to wait for a full Board of which Mr Law was informed at the time of his application—

Permit us sir to thank you for your polite and friendly Conduct in the businefs which gives us an opportunity of immediately dragging this Malignant Slanderer to light if he will dare to come forward with a charge which he must be conscious is grosly false. We request you will do us the favor to forward the enclosed to Mr Greenleaf immediately, as we wish not to lose a mail. We are, sir, with Sentiments of the highest respect—Yor mo obed Sevts

GUSTS SCOTT
WILLIAM THORNTON

EDM^D RANDOLPH
Sec^y of State.

GEORGE TOWN 20th July 1795

SIR

You have made to the Secretary of State charges against us of direct fraud and partiality in the execution of our office, to cover we believe your inability to comply with your engagements with the Publick. We call upon you to substantiate these charges, or to be considered as a false and infamous accuser. The President is now at Mount Vernon, where he will remain a month and will no doubt listen to any Charge which can be proved against officers of his appointment.

We are sir &c

GUSTS SCOTT
WILLIAM THORNTON

To

JAMES GREENLEAF Esq

New York July 31 1795

SIRS /

I have your letter of the 20 Inst—It would have been noticed before had I received it—but it came to my hands not an hour since with the Philadelphia-postmark of yesterday on the superscription—why it did not pass to me in the regular course with the postmark of George Town on it—is best known to yourselves—

You call on me to substantiate Charges made to the Secretary of State against you of *direct fraud* in the Execution of your office—I have never made such Charges. Subjoined is a transcript of my letter to the Secretary of State which by yours to me I should judge you had not seen. In my Letter I have said that I do firmly believe that you have been governed by your personal Interest to the detriment of the part of the City—I wished the most to promote; and that one of my motives for disposing of my property in the Federal City arose from The conviction in my own mind that you would oppose every obstacle to my operations while tending to the benefit of that part of the City. I see here no charge of *Fraud*. I do still and ever shall believe what I advanced to the Secretary of State and unfortunately for the federal Establishment, I am not alone in this belief.—

If my feelings have been wounded by your conduct towards me and my interests since your being in Office, I conceived I had a right to be governed by them and have acted accordingly.—

I see no necessity of assuming the position in which it is evidently your desire to place me, to wit that of an accuser of fraudulent transactions—proofs of that nature whatever facts may be are difficult, because they require a minute investigation of a long series of transactions—and as you have in the present instance no right to call on me for such proofs, I shall not trouble myself by any attempts to make them

You intimate in your Letter that my charge of fraud on your part arises from a wish on mine to cover my inability to comply with my engagements with the public. This appears to me to be a very strange mode of reasoning, and I declare to you is totally unfounded; but had you aided me as I conceive I had a right to expect from you, and as your worthy predecessors thought with me, you should have found at least that I could have done more than I did do; be this as it may

I am not ashamed of the operations of which I have been the principal promoter and you as the servants of the public ought to have viewed them with peculiar satisfaction, when you found that those operations gave a use of eighteen fold in some instances to the value of the property entrusted to you—I will further add that those operations have called for expenditures on my part and the Gentlemen concerned with me of upwards of one hundred and fifty thousand Dollars for the past year a sum fourfold what was ever contemplated by your predecessors as necessary to the fulfillment of my Contract; and that at least three times that sum has actually flown to the federal establishment through my immediate means and those concerned with me—If therefore the strict letter of agreement has in some instances been deviated from, the spirit of the Agreement has been attended to, and I know too well the intention of the President to believe he placed you where you are to cavil at trifles—

I repeat to you, Sirs, that I have no desire or time to enter the lists with you and prove that you have acted fraudulently; further that it is unfortunate both for yourself and the public that you are placed in a sphere in which you will neither render them service or do yourselves honor—

G SCOTT
& } Esqrs
WM THORNTON } Washington

JAMES GREENLEAF

George Walker, a Scotchman from Falkirk, was a prosperous merchant in Philadelphia. When he was not examining his ledgers he was listening to the Congressional debates. He was shrewd; he caught the drift and hied himself hitherward and bought a large area destined to be within the Territory of Columbia. He was a tartar. When he was out of temper, and he was generally out, he without deviation designated the device on the card. His letters ought to be in the school readers as specimens of directness in English. Nicholson and Walker had dispute over division lines; they were so much alike they differed all the more. The partiality of the Commissioners for the western section excited Walker's ire and he wrote a few letters. I reproduce them as illustrations of linguistic strength and for the historical incident.

GENTLEMEN: Agreeably to your request I now send you in writing my reasons for being of the opinion that the public area allotted for the Marine hospital should not be changed or abolished. On the 17th of September, 1791, when the people were collected at the first public sale of lots a plan of the city, drawn by Maj. L'Enfant and approved by the President of the United States, was produced by the commissioners as the adopted and standard plan of the city. In this plan all the public areas were appropriated by having their names wrote in them at length or by the letters A, B, C, &c., which were fully explained in the margin of the plan. A number of the lots were accordingly sold by that plan, and the purchasers gave a price as they conceived the lots valuable from their

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contiguity to certain public buildings. In December, 1791, or January, 1792 (do not recollect which), the President of the United States, as such, sent a message to the House of Representatives in Congress, with a plan of the City of Washington, as adopted and ratified by him, and informing them (among other things) that from the rate of sales already made, the lots would be an ample fund. In this plan which was hung up on the Speaker's chair, all the public appropriations were marked and wrote out at full length and which I frequently read. Next day the President's message with these appropriations taken from the plan, were published in all the Philadelphia newspapers, and since then over the civilized world.* When the plan came to be engraved Mr. Jefferson advised the President not to insert any of the appropriations but the two principal, not recollecting (I presume) what had already taken place, but even with the engraved plan a large public building with gardens is inserted in the area intended for the Marine hospital,† and to my knowledge purchases have been made upon the avenues leading to it in consequence thereof. Under the circumstances any alterations of the public appropriations would be a glaring violation of public and national faith, and every man whether citizen or foreigner, who has purchased lots in that city would have a just plea against the United States for indemnification, as the act of the President is that of the United States. Besides, the principle of alteration being once admitted, a violent conflict of interests would immediately ensue and the whole system would set afloat on the ocean of uncertainty. Hence, therefore, the public opinion would be the City of Washington was nothing but a fluctuating bubble, and that it would be imprudent and improper to engage in such an unstable object.

Gentlemen, yours,

GEORGE WALKER.

PHILADELPHIA, October 4, 1796.
COMMISSIONERS OF WASHINGTON CITY.

* PRESIDENT WASHINGTON TO THE COMMISSIONERS OF THE CITY OF WASHINGTON.

PHILADELPHIA, 1 December, 1796

GENTLEMEN:

The discontents with which you are assailed by one or other of the proprietors in the Federal City, must, unquestionably, be very disagreeable and troublesome to you, for they are extremely irksome to me. In the case however before us, I conceive Mr. Corachichi might have received a definite answer without referring the matter to the Executive. On what part of the Contract with Greenleaf he has founded an opinion that a site was designated for a University, and has built his complaints—or how it came to pass, that any allusion to such a measure should have found its way into that contract, I have no more recollection than I have conception, of what could have induced it;—for your clerk has omitted sending the extract

* * * * *

A University was not even contemplated by Major L'Enfant in the plan of the city which was laid before Congress; taking its origin from another source.—This plan you shall receive by the first safe hand who may be going to the Federal City.—By it you may discover (tho' almost obliterated) the directions given to the Engraver by Mr. Jefferson, with a pencil, what parts to omit.—The principle on which it was done I have communicated to you on more occasions than one. With Esteem &c

Also, American State Papers, Vol. I

† On the eastern branch a large spot is laid out for a marine hospital and gardens. — Travels through the States of North America. *Isaac Weld, junior.* 1795-'6-'7.

The building where Massachusetts and Georgia streets meets, is intended for a *Marine Hospital*, with its gardens.—An Historical, Geographical, Commercial and Philosophical View of the United States of America, and of the European Settlements in America and the West Indies.—*W. Winterbotham, 1796.*

The Commissioners overlooked a reply.

GENTLEMEN—This forenoon I received notice by Mr. Brent, one of your clerks, that you would divide square No. 1065 by alternate lots tomorrow morning. Previous to such a rash undertaking you will please attend to the following facts. When last fall we divided the squares in which I alone am interested as original proprietor, I observed in you an uncommon avidity to grasp at the largest and best part of my property. When we had divided all my squares of consequence except No. 1065 I discovered that the public had got 125,974 $\frac{3}{4}$ square feet more than they were entitled to and of the best part of my property. Upon my representing this case and showing a certificate from your surveyor to that effect to your board then composed of Mr. Scott and Mr. Thornton, Mr. Scott promised with consent of Mr. Thornton that the balance due me should be allowed in square No. 1065. This is a fact that I am clear to make oath to, and will do so in any court of law or equity in the United States. Confiding in the faithful performance of this promise I proceeded to divide and subdivided all the squares in which I was partly interested lying along the southwest side of my property. It is therefore possible that you can conceive that I will be thrown back upon Abraham Young's line to take near 126000 square feet, in lieu of the same quantity taken by you, in the most valuable part of my city property. This is therefore formally to inform you not to attempt any more division of my property till I shall be put upon an equality with the public. And I further assure you that should you attempt any division of my property till I have justice done me, that I will as soon after as possible institute a suit in chancery in order to compel you to do your duty faithfully and impartially. Notwithstanding the haughty and arrogant manner with which you affect to treat the original proprietors at the east end of the city you will please to recollect that you and even your master the President, are only public servants, bound by certain limits, which will be found too strong for you to break through.

As a suit will necessarily draw after it a public investigation into the conduct of the commissioners respecting the application of the public money and other property you will please to be prepared to answer the following, with other questions that will be put to you this winter by means of the Philadelphia and Baltimore newspapers. As there is no power in either the President or commissioners to apply the public money or property to any other purpose than the public buildings, how came you as honest men not to oblige your predecessors in office or those concerned in the speculation to refund to the city treasury the large sum expended in building a stone bridge and chain of wharves in the town of Georgetown, instead of which you have expended another large sum of the public money in Georgetown upon a wooden bridge containing an expensive and unnecessary draw to no purpose but to deceive travelers by endeavoring to make them believe that a speculation made by one of yourselves up Rock Creek is more valuable than it really is? How some of you presume to give your friend General Forrest, a deed for a lot to which you knew the public had no title, and afterwards to atone for your folly, to say nothing worse, to give upwards of a large square of the public lots, when in justice you ought to have satisfied him out of your own private property.

You will please to recollect that, although the public property cost you nothing, yet we will expect you will take care of it and that you subsist by money arising from the sales of our property given to the public for certain purposes, the original proprietors expect you to do justice. I am your obedient servant.

Nov. 16th, 1796.

GEORGE WALKER.

The Commissioners deigned no reply. However, they persisted in making the division of the square pursuant to the notice by their clerk; and Walker retaliated by the publication in the *Washington Gazette* :

A CAUTION TO THE PUBLIC.

Whereas, the commissioners of the Federal buildings in Washington City, have, for private purposes, been in the practice of conveying property in that city to which they or the public had no title, thereby producing an immense waste of the funds for the public buildings and great emolument to those concerned.

And being informed from good authority that they intend to convey some of my property to which they have no title, this is therefore to forewarn all those concerned that the public have no title to any part of square No. 1065 in Washington City and that any conveyance the commissioners may pretend to give to any part of that square, will be rendered null and void by the real proprietor.

GEORGE WALKER.

By Walker's caution, the Commissioners were enticed into a controversy.

COMMISSIONERS' OFFICE.

CITY OF WASHINGTON, Nov. 21, 1796.

The Commissioners having observed in the *Washington Gazette* of the 19th inst. an advertisement entitled A CAUTION TO THE PUBLIC, Signed GEORGE WALKER, charging them with having "for *private purposes*, been in the practice of conveying property, in that city, to which they or the public had no title: thereby producing an immense waste of the funds for the Public Buildings &c great emolument to those concerned," the author is thus publicly called upon to make good his allegations; the Commissioners holding themselves bound to answer to charges exhibited against them, however false or unfounded and however obscure or insignificant the source whence they originate.

FOR WASHINGTON GAZETTE.

MR PRINTER,

The Commissioners of the Federal Buildings have, in your paper of this day, called upon me to make good the allegations contained in my caution to the public, inserted in your paper of the 19th instant; and although a court of law would have been the proper place for such a discussion, yet a due regard to public information impells me to comply with their request.

The Commissioners some time last year sold a lot, on Rock Creek, at what was then considered a very high price; but, to which, they knew that they or the public had no title, and, the real proprietor being about to correct their

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conduct by law, they were feign to compromise the matter by giving the purchaser a whole Square and a Lot of the public property, in the City, in lieu of the lot upon Rock Creek—This square has been lately sold for a large sum; hence “the waste of the fund for the public buildings, and the great emolument to those concerned.” The PRIVATE PURPOSES were, that one of the Commissioners had a large speculation in property on Rock Creek, previous to the sale of the lot above mentioned, and it might be useful thereby, to stamp a nominal value upon property on that stream.

The expensive and unnecessary Draw, now erecting upon the Bridge across Rock-Creek, must also be for some PRIVATE PURPOSE; for it is evident to every one, that it cannot answer any PUBLIC PURPOSE.

The Commissioners having attempted, contrary to the Deed of Trust, forcibly to wrest from me, and convey to others, about twenty-five of my best lots, more than the public are entitled to, and, finding them deaf to all reasoning and argument on the subject, I was, at last, contrary to my inclination, compelled to caution the public, and the late fact, of a similar nature, became, of course, a preamble to it.

That any set of men, appointed by the President, should, in their public capacity, descend into personal abuse, is what I did not expect. It is, however, certainly better to be OBSCURE than to be CONSPICUOUS for folly, arrogance, partiality and misconduct; and it is better to be INSIGNIFICANT than to be CONSEQUENTIAL, from having the management of other people's property, which is sometimes applied to purposes foreign to the appropriation—And, notwithstanding the Commissioners have assumed an importance, known no where but in their own vain imaginations, they will please to recollect that they are only public Servants chained up by the DEED of TRUST, and that, as they are fed and clothed by money arising from my property with that of others, we expect, and have a right to demand, that they serve us humbly, faithfully, and impartially.

I am Sir

Yours, &c

GEORGE WALKER.

November 23, 1796.

COMMISSIONERS' OFFICE,

CITY OF WASHINGTON, Nov. 29, 1796.

The Commissioners observe that Mr. Walker, in compliance with their Note of the 21st instant, has deigned to particularize his charge, by which it appears that “*the practice of the Commissioners of conveying property to which neither they nor the public have any right,*” has dwindled down to a single instance, the sale of a Lot on Rock Creek, and this Fact he leaves without proof, and without stating any circumstances relative to it.

To an impartial and discerning public no stronger refutation of his general charge can be exhibited; yet, as this points to a matter of real dispute and litigation, the Commissioners beg leave to submit to the public view, the out-lines of that transaction.—Morris and Greenleaf, by their contract for the purchase of lots, were excluded from the right of selection in certain water lots, the contract was so worded as to create a doubt with regard to its real construction; the Commissioners were of opinion that the exclusion extended to the waters of Rock Creek; and in this they were supported by the opinions of the Attorney General of the

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United States, and other eminent counsel. Morris and Greenleaf entertained different sentiments; and, it is believed, had different advice. The Commissioners proceeded to sell a lot in that predicament; A law-suit naturally ensued, which has lately been compromised by a relinquishment, on the part of Morris and *Nicholson, of all right of selection in lots adjacent to Rock-Creek, upon condition that the Commissioners would convey to the purchaser under those gentlemen, the lot alluded to by Mr. WALKER: to this the Commissioners readily agreed.

If the title, of Morris and Nicholson, to the Lot sold, was good, (and that it was so, is the sole foundation of Mr. WALKER's charge against the Commissioners, "for selling property to which the public had no title"), surely the compromise was highly advantageous to the city; for Morris and Nicholson are thereby excluded from a selection of a large property, much more valuable than what they must now resort to, in making up their quantity: But, supposing their title doubtful; or even supposing the final determination should have been favourable to the Commissioners, yet that highly interesting event, the completion of Morris and Nicholson's selection must have been postponed, and a great proportion of the City property have remained locked up 'till the final decision: for the Commissioners, believing as they did, and advised as they were, would have been highly censurable, had they given up the point without a legal decision against them.

The compensation to be made to the Purchaser under the Commissioners was left to two disinterested and independent gentlemen to determine; who, it is presumed, had as good a knowledge of the relative value of property in the city as Mr. WALKER.

Whether the draw in the Bridge over Rock-Creek is necessary or unnecessary, the Commissioners leave to every passenger to form his own opinion.

With respect to Mr. WALKER's particular case, they shall only observe, that they may fairly claim an equal share of disinterestedness and impartiality with Mr WALKER himself: they shall therefore not trouble the public with copies of the deeds of trust; the Acts of Congress, and of the Legislature of Maryland, under which they act; nor with the particular modes which the board have adopted, for carrying into effect the powers vested in them, for the division of property; a due consideration of any particular case; but this they can truly say, that they have not distinguished Mr WALKER from the other proprietors of the city in their mode of procedure; that Mr Walker alone, so far as they know, has complained, but it is difficult to believe that he thinks himself really injured, for, he must be sensible, if he is so, that his remedy is more certainly attainable in a court of justice, than by publishing a LIBEL.

*Nicholson is the joint purchaser of Greenleaf's property in the City of Washington.

Mr. Morris was large hearted and good natured, slow to anger and swift to conciliate. Of all methods of quarrel that through the medium of publication was to him the most distasteful. He met Mr. Walker on a thoroughfare of the City of Brotherly Love and chided him for his rashness to which the Scot replied if he (Morris) would be his guest at dinner he should have a convincing exposition. Mr. Morris to Mr. Nicholson

anent the Walker controversy writes, it is to be observed, at once and in advance of the Commissioners' reply, and it is also to be observed, he scores their reprehensible language—"to answer charges exhibited against them, however false or unfounded and however obscure or insignificant the source whence they originate."

PHILADA Nov 27, 1796

I had seen before they came the Publication of George Walker and was astonished, for I had conceived that he was a cool temperate man possessed of too much Prudence to risque a general Injury to his own and other Peoples Property for the sake of gratifying the feelings of resentment which will arise often from hasty and sometimes unfounded Conclusions—I wish also that the Commissioners had left out the last sentence of their Publication in reply but these things are done—you and I in common with other Proprietors shall be injured thereby unless the affair be immediately adjusted and the Commiffers proved not to have incurred the Charges made against them—

And Mr. Morris quaking with fear arising from like trouble impending implores Mr. Nicholson:

At all Events keep Law from Publications otherwise we do not know what we may be compelled to do, and I detest news Paper Controversies—

Mr. Morris thinks this a time oportune to exercise a pacific influence on the waters stirred so strongly by storm and writes:

PHILA Feby 16 1797

GUSTAVUS SCOTT Esqr^e GEO TOWN
DEAR SIR

In consequence of your letter of the 8th Inst it was my intention to have seen the President before this time but his and my own Engagements have as yet prevented it—I am astonished to find that you suffer a moments uneasiness at such Charges as you mention—"Haughtines in Office" & "residing out of the City." Certainly I never saw any thing like the first charge in my Intercourse with you in or out of Office and so I shall tell the President when I do see him—as to residing without the City, your new House is so near to one of its Boundaries that when you get into it the Objection can hardly exist in the mind of Mr. Law who has more anxiety on that score than any body I know & his anxiety proceeds from an ardent Zeal in promoting the Growth and Interest of the City—I believe you may without incurring the Charge of vanity consider the little Heats and Vexations which occasionally arise in the Course of Official Transactions rather as Proofs that in the strict regard you pay to a sense of duty the Parties find an opposition to their views & Wishes which irritates and occasions the Complaints—never mind my good Friend Stick to your station and follow up the business with the same Zeal as heretofore, and all will go well—Mr Nicholson was ill used by Mr Sheriff Ray and his assistants—This afforded you gentn of George Town an Oppy to manifest your Philanthropy which much to your honor you embraced, and did the thing which will always be remembered with Gratitude—Mr Nicholson is

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here, and mentions to me those things which you allude to as disagreeable—
These disagreeables will be the subject of a Correspondence differing from this in
which I give you assurance of the Regard & Esteem with which you have
impresed

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Yrs

ROBT MORRIS.

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I now approach the climax of quarrel: the Morris and Nicholson—Greenleaf controversy. Only one volume stands between preservation and extinction of the record—the single volume of *The Washington Gazette*. In the title I name first Morris and Nicholson as the contest had its origination and inception with Nicholson.

Morris and Greenleaf while not friendly were of that temperament and receptiveness to argument that disputes between them could be adjusted upon lines of equity and reciprocity. Morris and Nicholson were strongly attached and the former was impelled to champion the latter when in conflict with Greenleaf, although contrary to his sense of right. Nicholson was bitter towards Greenleaf. Nicholson had a facility to write and propensity to print. Nicholson had utilized the daily journals in hostility to Greenleaf which Morris deplored and might but for weakness defeated.

Morris from Washington to son-in-law, Marshall, November 1, 1796, writes:

You will see or hear that Mr Nicholson & Mr Greenleaf have entered into a news paper War, which has injured not only them but me, altho I have as yet kept myself clear of it, and I would also have prevented them if they had been on the spot, but one was here and the other in Philad^a and without personal interviews the conciliation was impracticable.

Morris to Nicholson, December 6, 1776, says:

The mischiefs of yours with Greenleaf continue to the Injury of him you and me.

And on the 12th further says:

I had an Interview with Mr Greenleaf this day. He is distresed—He asked in what Capacity we met, as Friends or Foes, I told him that question could only arise out of the quarrell with you, and that I had kept myself out of it hitherto & meant to continue so if possible—I told him that I blamed both you and him for appearing in Print before the Public, that he had an Oppy of stopping your first advertizement & ought to have done it &c &c—He says the dispute must be pursued until one or the other shall be exonerated in the Public view to compleat satisfaction.

What has been advanced as to the reasonableness of Messrs. Morris and Greenleaf to rightful adjustment is confirmed by the letter of the former to Nicholson (details of concessions by Greenleaf being omitted) :

PHILAD^A Jan^y 22 1797

My last letter has produced a personal interview this moment ended. The subject of discourse has been about a general arrangement of our dependencies upon amicable terms and upon principles of justice and mutual accommodation in which your affairs may be included if you please so far at least as they are combined with mine—A plan of proceeding is to be submitted to my consideration.

Notwithstanding Morris's equitable and peaceable methods were happily so close to consummation the day after his letter, January 23, and before its receipt Nicholson pursues the pen and print practice and inserts in the *Washington Gazette* a "Caution."

Morris notifies Nicholson, January 24 :

Mr. Greenleaf says he cannot have communication with you, but if you choose to submit your affairs so far as they run parallel with mine to be determined by the settlement he and I shall make, he will agree to it.

With might and main Morris exerted every energy to prevent the newspaper duel and he imperatively urges Cranch :

PHILAD^A Feby 17th 1797

You will also finish and send on those Accounts of which I gave you a list they will now be immediately wanted for my settlement with Mr Greenleaf which will be carried on in the Counting House & *not in the Public Prints.*

It was a case of fat and fire. Greenleaf saw Nicholson's "caution" and engaged the editor to use most bold display type for his "caution" to run indefinitely.

I am of opinion that every line over the signatures Robert Morris and John Nicholson, jointly or separately, was written by Nicholson. The series of seven letters, the first of which is dated March 30, 1797, by their detail are convincing, however their iteration and re-iteration make them tiresome and tedious. All they contain could have more effectively been said in half, perhaps less, the length.

Morris thought Greenleaf was buried out of sight and beyond resurrection under the avalanche of words and triumphantly writes on to Washington to his friend Scott, April 15, 1797 :

I expect the Comifs will be of that opinion, and consequently that they will sign and send them to us, surely they will not pay attention to the Caveat of

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Master Jemmy—you will see what a dressing we shall give him about City Lotts as well as his other specified Claims—I believe he now wishes himself with the Devil, for our attacks are so fortified with Truth that he cannot slip his neck out of the noose, and we have told the story so dispassionately, that he cannot answer in Wrath.—

I express no opinion as to the merits of the controversy, that is, the facts of it. Sufficient is not disclosed for impartial judgment. I do think that Greenleaf's philippic reaches the topmost heights of rhetorical invective. I believe I am justified in comparing it to Sallust's denunciation of Cataline in the ancient times and to Burke's of Hastings in the modern. His severity has the rapier's point.

TO MESSRS. MORRIS AND NICHOLSON.

GENTLEMEN

In publishing my cautionary Advertisements of the 15th and 27th ult., I discharged a duty which I owed to myself, and my fellow-citizens; but not without anticipating that display of artifice, to frustrate the beneficial effects of the publication; and that effusion of violence, to evince your resentment against its author; which have since issued from the press, under your authority in five labored, delusive, and vindictive, essays. In our personal animosities, however, the public will be little disposed to participate; of the merits of our pecuniary controversy, the medium of a news-paper can but poorly enable them to judge; and, for the abuse of their time and patience, there cannot, I confess, be any consolation, or atonement, unless a view of the embarrassment to which I am exposed, shall seasonably prevent others from being involved as victims, in the vortex of your speculations. Having, therefore, given a candid warning to the unwary and the credulous; having made an honest provision to protect the rights of my creditors; I find no motive from malice, or interest; from a confidence in your honor, or a reliance on my own talents, which can induce me longer to continue in this scene of fruitless and vexatious warfare—To the investigation of the arbitrators (on whom we have agreed to depend) I shall implicitly for the future refer all my claims; and by the result of their deliberations I cheerfully consent to rest every hope of triumph, or to encounter every mortification of defeat.

* * * * *

I will not, however, at this time, and in this mode, enter further into the detail of those answers which I am able, on incontrovertible evidence, to apply to all your remarks: and it can hardly be necessary before the public tribunal (where your characters and conduct have long stood arraigned) to vindicate myself from accusations and calumnies, that depend on your assertion alone. But let the appeal be made; let our fellow citizens decide upon the notoriety of the facts; which has most cause to deprecate the fatal connection that has hitherto subsisted between us! On your part, I know not of any foundation for complaints, unless it shall be traced to the detention of a useless parcel of old and cancelled notes, or bills, which I shall willingly surrender, on the final liquidation of our accounts. But to me, the retrospect furnishes a lamentable picture indeed; in which my con-

fidence has only been equalled by your treachery; and an ample fortune, in specie and in land, has been so absorbed by your machinations, as scarcely to leave any symbol of its existence, but the waste and worthless paper, branded with the signatures of Morris and Nicholson.

Under such circumstances, I may confidently retort your asperitions and menaces, with contempt and defiance; and though the lure of your arts and the contagion of your example, have undoubtedly led me into great errors (injurious, perhaps, to many individuals, for whom I am anxious to prepare all the reparation in my power) I trust that I have never yet been so debased by prosperity, or by misfortunes, as to render it hazardous, on any point of reputation, or in any form of inquiry, to engage in a comparison with you—My veracity, is, at least, untainted by any abuse of public trust; my conscience will never be disquieted by the embezzlement of a widow's or an orphan's portion; and, I hope, I shall never be so callous as to smile, in pomp and luxury, on the penury and ruin, which I have inflicted on others.

Be assured then, Sirs, that a competition with you in a court of justice (where, alone, I shall ever again consent to answer you) or an appeal to public opinion, has no terrors for me; I have been despoiled of my property; but my integrity, and that peace of mind, which is the inseparable concomitant of integrity, you can never destroy.

JAMES GREENLEAF.

April 22.

The allusion to the Comptroller-General and the Financiers' confusion of funds, state and federal, touched a vulnerable point; the sting maddened to frenzy. They rejoined, April 26, 1797; Greenleaf adhered to his announced silence.

In a doubting way, Morris to Scott, May 1, 1797, writes:

I suppose you have seen Greenleaf's abusive Letter & my moderate Reply—People think us victorious in that Contest.

And again, May 8, he to Scott writes:

My enemy pleases himself very much and takes great Credit with assignees for having hunted out the road to these attachments and he is setting as many of our Creditors as he can on the same scent. I hope that he & they will get as sick of this business as he is of being an "Author" I believe he does not mean to reply to our last letter which was written in terms of great moderation in reply to his very abusive one.

I conclude *Quarrels* with Morris's letter to Scott which is apropos in a summary style to several subjects in this work:

PHILA MAY 10, 1797

Master Jemmy has opened Pandoras Box, and if I am not mistaken much of the Mischief will attach to himself—In the mean while he has injured us exceedingly and I would chastise him in a personal Interview but for certain Injunctions

and Considerations which must be submitted to—You touch me to the quick in regard to the Building Subject—I have expended ten times the sum I was told my House was to cost & the Roof is not compleat, the fourth Front not carried up nor a single floor laid or Wall plaistered and now I am out of money and Credit, so that all stands still, and unless Times change the Work cannot be resumed by me—Thus you may judge how sufficiently I am chastized for my folly—I call it folly altho' when I began that House I knew that in a few months I was to receive £75000 Stg Cash, which I did receive, but before it came I was involved for £124,000 Stg in the failures of March 1793 in London, & the sacrifices made to keep along ever since have always kept me in Trouble Loss and difficulty.

Adieu My Dr Sir

I am truly

Yrs

ROBT MORRIS.

