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TO MAJOR AMBROSE WHITLOCK
District Paymaster, &c.
No 3.

I feel not the least reluctance in acknowledging, that I was under a misapprehension with regard to the amount of money, that had been transmitted to you in the winter, and spring of last year, and although I have in vain applied for, and endeavoured to obtain certain documents which probably would account for it, I have no hesitation in admitting, that from the letters of the Paymaster General, it is probable that I must have misunderstood him. As soon however as I discovered that the mistake existed, I immediately published the documents, which were calculated to correct it; and to show the true amount of money which had been placed at your disposal. And in now declaring that the error, if committed by me, was unintentional, I have not such a poor opinion of my character for veracity, as to fear that any one *honest man* who knows me, will doubt the sincerity of my declaration—And let me ask you, whether you do not know, and the public prints of the day do not show, that other delegates left congress at the same time, under very erroneous impressions, relative to the payment of *their constituents*? Did not *many* members of congress at the preceding session, return with impressions infinitely *more erroneous*? And have you not admitted, and do not the newspapers prove, that even at the last session of congress, the delegates and representatives from your district were misled into an opinion that you had received double the amount of money that had been transmitted to you? Why then select me, as the peculiar object of your spite?

As there is no single circumstance to justify your insinuation that in my offer to pay the troops of this territory without any compensation for my trouble, I was governed by a desire to derive some pecuniary advantage from getting the public funds into my hands—And as the manner, in which I promptly disposed of the money with which I was intrusted for that purpose, is proof sufficient to repel the insinuation. I might with propriety remind you of an old proverb, very applicable to your case—but I will content myself with barely remarking, that such motives would scarcely be suspected by any man, *whose own heart* did not suggest to him, that he himself would not be proof against their influence under similar circumstances. And

really sir, if you had never derived any advantages from the public funds, that have been placed in your hands, beyond the legal monthly pay of a District Paymaster, I can hardly suppose you would be so ready to call the attention of the public to the contrast between “my situation and circumstances,” and your own—or that you would have so often withheld payment under frivolous pretexts, requiring that muster rolls should be changed into “alphabetical form,” and endeavouring to convince the Paymaster General, that the discharged rangers and militia would be less dissatisfied that seventy thousand dollars should remain in your hands for months together, than with a partial payment of that much to themselves at a time when the instalments for the lands they had purchased of the government, were constantly becoming due—Look at the document you have published—“it is to the point.”

Never having wished to injure you, or to interfere with you in any way whatever, further than has been demanded by necessary self defence or the duty I owed my constituents, I have no desire “to be informed of the time, and place of the proposed investigation of your conduct, before a proper tribunal” nor can I discover any magnanimity in the offer, without you having previously furnished me with the documents necessary to a full investigation, as you well know that I could not otherwise procure them. If I could only be so fortunate as to escape your misrepresentations, most gladly would I abstain from all, & every act calculated in the least degree, to interrupt “your peaceful retirement.”

But although I do not intend to be your accuser before the proposed “tribunal” yet as you have thought it necessary to quote “the rules and articles of war,” that relates to false muster rolls. I beg leave to remind you that there is immediately preceding it a similar “rule & article,” that relates to *false pay rolls*, which, if I am to judge from your conduct, you seem to have totally forgotten.

As District Paymaster, your duties were plainly defined, and prescribed by law—these duties, you had not the power to transfer to any other person—the law & common sense equally forbade it.

You have the credit of having made such representations to the Paymaster General, as to induce him to require the obnoxious oath, that has been the subject of so much recent discussion—and you state yourself that you had been strictly enjoined by your instructions, “to guard by all possible means against impostors, fraudulent claims &c.” therefore if you had the power, you *ought not* to have transferred your duties.

Yet notwithstanding the solemn injunctions of the law—and of the Paymaster General—“perfectly inattentive to, and careless of your duty” you did in a variety of instances, place your pay rolls

in the hands of irresponsible individuals, (some of whom, if you are to be believed were unworthy of confidence,) you trusted to them to perform your own duties—they, in some cases, trusted to other agents, of their own creation. And did you not return the men on those rolls, as paid by yourself without ever having seen one of them? Oh! How treacherous must have been your memory when you declared “that you dared not, nor did not vary one iota from your instructions”!!!

But this is not all—you did at different times, and places permit, & invite certain individuals to sign other men’s names to your pay rolls, without any authority written or verbal—and you returned men as paid by you, who had never received a cent of their pay from you—nor had authorised any other person to receive it for them—*were not all these false returns*? I charge you with no bad motives—you are welcome to assign good ones.

You may allege if you please, that your object was to have the men paid & that you had not time to perform that duty yourself—and as proof of your sincerity, you may state the whole length of time, that you have given to the discharge of your duties in this territory, since the first commencement of the war—or you may show if you can that you were not as much bound to attend to your duties in this part of your district as in Indiana—I merely state the facts—which can be established (in a court of justice, if you please, by a multitude of witnesses. I let me ask, was not such conduct contrary to law—contrary to your instruction—contrary to your duty—and in direct violation of your oath of office? I do not such facts constitute “serious charges against an officer of your high standing?” and are they not sufficient to show that you are one of the last men in the world who ought to have impugned the motives of others, or exhibited unjust charges against them, concerning “*false rolls*?”

Every disinterested and impartial reader of this reply, to your address, will see that I have “only returned your own assault” and “I am now done with you.” At parting however, permit me to express a hope, that you will not forget, “the calm spirit of conscious rectitude, and dignity that ought to prevail in all discussions.” & that you will remember that abusing of others is the poorest way in the world, to acquit yourself—I have set you no bad example—for if I have in a single instance, used harsh, indecorous or intemperate language, it will be found to be merely, as a quotation from your own publication.

BENJAMIN STEPHENSON.

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