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By ELIHU STOUT,

PUBLISHER OF THE LAWS OF
THE UNITED STATES.

THE WESTERN SUN,

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To Mr. Benjamin Stephenson,
RECEIVER OF PUBLIC MONIES,
AT EDWARDSVILLE.

SIR.—I have read your first & second numbers, and instead of seeing any thing like exculpatory evidence in your own behalf, they seem to be principally composed of supercilious reproaches and erroneous and futile charges against me.—Those letters have a deceptive appearance of candour, that can only impose for a moment—all who have read my former notice of you will be able to detect the artifice. I will not charge you with writing them—I think I know better—they are in my opinion written by a man whose arrogant vanity, & presumption, are equal to your own—the one betraying him constantly into errors, the other making him persist in them—But with him I have at present nothing to do—I only regret that he should make you appear so very regardless of truth, and so indifferent to the shame of being convicted of falsehood. You well know that there are many declarations in those letters regardless of every thing but present expediency—this course he may deem necessary for himself as well as you, but it is all a blunder, whatever opinions it may excite there you should know that it will and can be properly estimated elsewhere.—That your writer & yourself only perservers to gull the people, I might quote many instances to prove, but having the duties of my office to attend to, I shall pass over them in silence with decent contempt, to notice a few particular points. In attempting to do this I find it difficult to use suitable terms to characterise the conduct of both yourself and your writer without using such as I cannot condescend to employ.—were I to say that the most odious and unworthy beings that have ever presumed to be ambitious, did not could not, be more deserving of the wages of inequity, I might appear to many who may read this letter and be totally unacquainted with the parties, to write too passionately—but sir, it would be true, when men will seem to forget that there is a spirit of virtue and moral honesty in the people and appeal to them to justify a total positive want of both—when knaves will attempt to bubble—silly weak men to bully, or deceitful men to impose, it surely is not unbecoming those whose minds are uncorrupted, whose spirits are unextinguished, whose conduct has ever been blameless, to speak plain and plain I shall speak.

In your first attack upon me you talked much of being slandered, how applicable any such language can be in your last address to me, I am satisfied to let others judge; but to answer your purpose you keep up the cry, why sir your talk upon this head, and elections and in fact, nine tenths of all you have had written for you is nothing but sheer slander upon me. I am incapable of slandering you or any other person; you forced me to come out & speak the truth, and truth is no slander, referring to my former letter, I shall pass over all this stuff to get at your handsome charge against me, for most illegally & improperly transferring my duties to you, you seem or your writer does for you, to exult in this charge as though you had really gained a victory; but I think the plain simple facts of this transaction will place you in such a di-

lemma that no man of even common honesty can envy your situation. As district paymaster, it is & ever has been, out of my power legally to transfer my duties; and no person, I presume, except he were a knave or a fool, would receive such a transfer from me. Without having ever made one, I do acknowledge sir and with pleasure too, that in many instances it has been in my power to employ respectable and suitable persons, to aid me in the settlement of the numerous scattered militia claims throughout the district.—But I do most unequivocally deny that I ever selected or employed you, to do or perform any part of my duties as paymaster. I acknowledge that from your own solicitations & importunities, I permitted you to become the voluntary agent of a number of individual claimants, who did not attend at the places appointed for the General payments to take place, in due time.—You represented the situation of the absentees to be such as precluded the possibility of their attendance, and appeared to express considerable solicitude that they should without delay receive their pay, under those considerations and a knowledge of your apparent standing at that time, I did permit you to become their verbal agent, but never made you mine—no sir, you took upon yourself the responsibility to sign the names of the claimants, or make their marks on the receipt rolls of the companies to which they belonged, and it was upon the validity of this that I paid you the money, which you promised faithfully to give or rather deliver to the different individuals for whom you had signed. This sir is the statement of your agency, and I will leave it for the public to judge whether I made any transfer to you—whether you acted for me or represented and acted for, the individual claimants. I sanctioned the arrangement it is true, to accommodate the claimants, which I had a right to do when you signed their names & I also reported the payments as made. I do not know, nor have I ever enquired whether you did, or did not, give the money to its real owners: nor situated as you were & are, is it of any importance in this enquiry—it is of no importance to me. But I should presume, from the situation you then stood before the people, as a candidate for congress, using your utmost endeavours to forestall their desires that you paid it. Indeed, money, and the talk about money, may have been serviceable auxiliaries to your purpose; and were I to judge from some of the matter in your electioneering addresses you could make them serve the end in view, may not this account for your anxiety to get possession of it? I was fully authorised to do all I did do; if in delivering the money to the men, you performed your duty with equal faithfulness, there is no room for blame.

Now sir in all your struggles to locate a crime upon me, pause for a moment, and reflect what you have done for yourself—see however willing you may be for the sake of malignant self gratification to plunge into a vortex, if there be a chance for getting out of it! How long is it since you or your advocates charged me with being severe, morose, and unaccommodating? It is not long sir—yet you are now furnishing the very matter which proves the falsehood of that former charge also.—If I had been thus, would I to accommodate the absent claimants, have suffered you to sign their names and paid you the money for them? no sir and you know it.—But think I beseech you: before it be too late—for although you may have sin highly elevated, urging you on; yet perhaps it is easier at your stage of life, to retreat than progress—and safer too. That man must be callous to the moral turpitude of crimes, who can ever be urged to persist, when conscious of the fate that must await him. This advice is suggested by your own ideas.—You say I do not know that you have paid the money! I will repeat that I do not, nor is it necessary as the case stands, that I should know. There are competent witnesses to the transaction. It was not done in secret, it was done in open daylight; and sir, if there be one individual from whom you may possibly have withheld his money, he may commence suit against you, and not only recover his pay but if he does not choose to admit it, he may expose you to the penalties of the

law for forging his name, & fraudulently with-holding his money will be proof of the original design.

You may now have some view of the situation into which your writer may have thought it serviceable for himself, to place you, and if he continues his friendly endeavours he may yet place you in even a worse one, were it necessary I could show the impropriety and inconsistency of a great part of all you have said, that can in any degree effect me. I will content myself with a very few instances. You sign your name to the pieces that have been addressed to me—Yet I have intimated that I believe you are not the writer. To show why I believe so; and show the inconsistency, or falsehood of the declaration you make that you are not become familiar to complaints, I will publish a letter from your own dear self; and as it is here published letter for letter from the original, I hope it will in part, do away any cause I might hereafter have to correct your statements, I hope it will refresh your memory, improve your mind, & convince the public whether you are accustomed to complaints or not—Here it is.

KASKASKIA, AUG. 8, 1816.

DEAR SIR,

While at Washing city, I communicated from time to time to my constituents the information I received from Mr. Brent paymaster General, respecting the pay to the rangers and militia of Illinois he told me that early in the winter he had sent on drafts for a part and on the 30th of April he communicated to me from a letter he had received from you, that you had then drafts sufficient to pay of all the troops of every description except about \$3,000 on my return I found great dissatisfaction from some parts of the Territory against me for not getting their money. I am extremely anxious to now how the business is, as some blames me and some blames you I presume that you have not been able to change the drafts, or otherwise Mr. Brent have made some mistake, as I have been told that you have not yet got the money—please rite me.

Yours Respectfully,

B. STEPHENSON.

N. B. Capt. Bottinghous's company's muster roll was sent to me amounting to upwards of \$8,000 which sum I rec'd. of Mr. Brent and have paid to the men since my return.

Yrs. &c.

B. STEPHENSON.

I should be glad to hear from you which would enable me to satisfy the men of the will be satisfied.

The flat and curious manner in which it appears you wrote epistolary letters would cause no man to believe that you wrote the 1st & 2d numbers before mentioned. This circumstance may be some apology for your inconsistency and self condemnation—but when I revert to the excuse for your signing false muster rolls it will be of no avail either to you, or to the writer. Your reasoning (if I may be excused for so calling it) betrays a total ignorance, or a total want of sincerity, upon both the false musters and your own responsibility—it betrays sheer ignorance if you believe what you say—Sheer hypocrisy, if you do not, what duties did the government commission & pay you as Inspector to see performed? were you to receive pay and hold rank to inspect forms or substance? Forms of which the Government furnished models to satisfy and please themselves, or substance of which they know nothing, until they be presented. 'Twas to examine and inspect the substance sir, not to look at the size of the paper, or the number of strait lines on it.—You really think you were only responsible for form? no you do not?—you or your writer must I think know better. By saying so however, you endeavour to throw the whole weight of the substantial matter of the Rolls upon your subordinate officers—strange indeed? What sir, do you believe those officers must think of you? when they discover a pretence to praise them in one sentence, and in the next an endeavour to brand them with false musters in order to acquit yourself? You tell me to read your circulars, I have seen enough of them to surfeit,—when you were electioneering you promised to use your best exertions to gratify the wishes of

those men, you gained their suffrages, & as your present situation proves, used them with your best exertions no doubt, for your own advantage. If your writer had not motives and feelings of his own, he would not make you appear as he has—would it not have been more creditable—yes honorable under present circumstances for a man to have even sunk under the calamities of his friends, than to have plunged himself into ruin, under the false and pretended hope of dragging his adversary after him, unhappy man, dependant on one who will lead you into the thorny path of error and inconsistency—one who rather resembles a volunteer than a soldier regularly enlisted, one who says what he chooses—one who will deem it prudent to desert you, when his own safety requires it—and one too who will, if I mistake not show you in the end, that it is only for that he now cares. Unhappy man, your writer makes you seek protection and safety in even slandering the dead. Col. Whiteside is now in his grave else I should appeal to him for a contradiction of your tale respecting the servant.—He was a man and would not swerve from what he believed to be right. I had proceeded so far in reply to your two first numbers when your third came to hand, a few hours since. It appears to be composed of the very same materials as the preceding, and my observations on them will without alteration apply to it—without any regard to your own character your accomplished writer makes you aim altogether at conjuring up something to criminate me—all this were it even so will not shield either of you. But sir, you well know 'tis not so and when the whole matter be sifted, whether you know it or not the false rolls will be far to establish its total incorrectness. As you really appear to be much at a loss for some plausible expedients that may for a moment be perverted to suit your honest purpose and as you have again brought forward the unfounded charge of a transfer of duties, &c. &c. I will without hesitation furnish you with my own certificate of the facts—read it sir, and make it appear any thing that can cover your shame or your guilt.

I, Ambrose Whitlock, Dis. paymaster do hereby certify that I did permit Benjamin Stephenson—then called Major Benjamin Stephenson, since the Hon'ble. Benjamin Stephenson, delegate in congress, now Benjamin Stephenson, Esq. Receiver of public monies, district of Edwarsville, (I am thus particular lest the public may mistake the man) to become personally accountable and responsible for signing of his own voluntary free will, the names of sundry individual claimants for pay, on account of services rendered in the years 1812 & 1813 and that I paid to the said Benjamin the amount due the said absent claimants which he promised faithfully to deliver them and each of them,

A. WHITLOCK.

Now sir if you can find any other man under similar circumstances, who arranged matters as you did, and at this time entertains the same compunctions of honesty that appears in you, with regard to delivering the money to its lawful owners, I will if he appears as you have, give him also a certificate of the fact.—You say I have trusted to some who are unworthy, omitting your own name, I defy you to point out another, however if there be any, give the name and it will afford me pleasure to mark it with yours.

What must your friends think of you when they read these letters and revert to the manner and circumstance in which you must have made them believe you got hold of their money? Did you not tell them that it was for their accommodation and convenience that you had taken it upon yourself to sign their names? and what is it natural to suppose they should think of you now, when they see your pitiful attempts to brand me (four years afterwards,) with a crime for suffering you to carry this money to them? Can you believe that those men or the public will ever view a man worthy of their confidence in any respect, who permits himself to be made guilty of such inconsistent and disgraceful conduct by his own writer too, who to serve himself may say any thing—and all shall be of no avail. Truly sir, this writer of yours has made you stand before the public in a singular situation. Magnanimity would