Norfolk. June 29th 1848.

Gentlemen;

Your favour of the 20th Inst: has duly received; and I readily comply with your request to give it "an early reply".

I am fully sensible of the honour you do me, in asking "to obtain my" "consent to the use of my name as a Candidate for the Presidency of the U. S." "at the approaching election"; and I feel very grateful to you for the kind manner in which you have been pleased to express your wish. But it is a duty I owe not less to you than to myself, promptly to decline this honour and to withhold the consent you ask, so far at least as I may do so.

I am now far advanced in my Seventy Fourth year. During this long period, my constitution, both physical and intellectual, has undergone as much of the wear and tear of life as falls to the lot of most men; and I do not use the language of mere disqualification, I assure you, when I say that I regard myself now as utterly unfit, both in body and mind, to encounter the cares and labours necessarily incident to the proper discharge of the important trusts you wish to confide to me.

It requires but little sagacity, I think, to foresee the rapid approach of a state of things teeming with the future destiny of our Confederation. The spirit in which our Federal Compact was conceived has long since ceased to be felt. A strict adherence not merely to the letter but to the intent of that instrument, (by which alone the Government it creates can be preserved) has long been disregarded. The efforts of our Statesmen are no longer directed to the maintenance of our institutions and the advancement of the common good; but to the promotion of Sectional interests at the expence of the general welfare — to the substitution of attachment to party for love of country — and to procure the triumph of some ambitious leader in a factious contest for Office. When such contests are waged, by sordid

interest, for the sake of Victory and not of truth; and when men filling high places impudently avow, without rebuke, that "to the Victors belong the spoils" of their country, there is but one hope left to the vanquish'd, To realize this only hope of safety, they must rely upon stronger arms and stouter hearts than usually belong to the Priams of the falling State, who can but launch telum imbelle sine ictu – My heart is with you, Gentlemen, but I must repeat the declaration that I am no longer able to take an active part in the the stiring scenes which I believe to be near at hand.

To

Henry Churchill Semple.

William L. Yancey.

S. Heydenfelt.

John A. Campbell.

N. Harris.

Thos. Sumter Mays

and

John A. Elmore. Esqr. Committee &c.

I remain, very respectfully,

Gentlemen,

Your mo: obdt. servt.

Littn: W Tazewell

Dear Sir;

Your letter of the 20th Inst:, covering one from a Committee of Gentlemen of your State, was duly received. Since then, a mere envelope has come to my hands, containing a copy of the Journal of your Convention that was referd to but not sent with these letters. No letter from either Messrs. Calhoun or Lewis has been received. But as the communication of your Committee very properly asked for an early reply; and as nothing which either of the two gentlemen referd to might say could change my determination, I deemd it my duty to answer this communication at once. You will find this answer inclosed herewith.

If you and they with whom you are associated, regarding me as the most ancient type and exponent of your political principles, had, for that reason, chosen to cast your votes upon me, althó without the slightest expectation or hope of my election, as I should not have had any right to object to such a course, there would not have existed any propriety in asking me to approve it. When you ask me to become a Candidate, however, you oblige me to decide this question at once; and when required to answer, I could have no hesitation in deciding as I have done. I never sought an office in my life, and so long as I was capable of performing ~~the~~ its duties, I have never refused to take any which the people wishd me to fill. Acting under the influence of such motives, the probabilities of success or defeat have never been regarded by me as meriting any consideration. They who desire nothing can never be disappointed. But if any circumstance existed of sufficient consequence to provoke a choice, I might truly apply to myself what the poet has said of the last of the Romans, "Victrix causa Diis placuit, sed victa Catoni."

I am glad to find that there are others who ~~agree~~ concur with me in the opinion which I have long entertaind and expressd of General Cass. No consideration will ever induce me to vote for him. As between the two Candidates, I greatly prefer Genl. Taylor. But his Whig nomination, cunningly coupled as it is with that of a notorious Abolitionist,

and the dangerous renunciation of the Veto power, will oblige me to withold ~~from him~~ my support from him.

I write to you thus freely, because I am happy to recognize in you the son of a much valued friend, with whom, in days of yore, I was in the habit of communing most confidentially. Could he have lived to this day, we should have deplored together our isolated state, as the last of the little band, who from 1798 until now, had always rallied to the flag of "State Rights". But he is gone, and I alone remain to see it soil'd and tarnish'd by ~~the~~ unclean hands and the foul uses to which it has been and may again be applied.

Norfolk. June 29. 1848.

I remain, very truly yours,

Wm. W. Tazewell.

Henry C. Semple esq:

Montgomery,

Alabama.

Norfolk. June 29th 1848.

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