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Letter from Josiah Johnston to George Sibley, December 1828

Josiah Stoddard Johnston

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(George C. Sibley)

J. S. Johnston

Washington Dec. 1828

My Dear Sir

I I duly recd. yours of the 26 Ult. It has found us assembled after a most signal defeat, but in better humour than during the angry contest- The Genl. has been elected by a majority that makes him master- He does not owe his elevation to any political leader, & may therefore chose his measures & select his men without consulting any individual- & indeed if he had a full majority, he would have found it impossible to move, with so many conflicting interests & rival pretensions.

The General is the President & every Patriot must wish that he may conduct us peaceably and safely & wisely through his term of office- In doing which he will not meet with a factious & indiscriminate opposition- He will be sustained as far as the honor & interest of the Country require- There is no object in opposing him, but when demanded by principle- & the effect would be to keep the party together & united for any future purpose.- We have therefore nothing to do, It becomes us to be Silent & tranquil- & wait for events- The friends of the General are now waiting for the 4th March with great interest, they are entirely ignorant of his Views. He has a delicate task to perform in Selecting his Cabinet from the Rival partisans – Different States as well as individuals have their Claims, how he is to reconcile all, Cannot be Seen- But he is strong enough to do as he pleases & if there are some Secret griefs he will not regard that- & they will not complain aloud- Mr. Calhoun & Mr. Van Buren will be rival candidates- & the elements of party will begin to separate- & form again- It is very desirable to give some repose to the Country- but that I believe is impossible, the Editors on their own responsibility will Keep the Subject in Constant agitation- It is very important to Keep Mr. Clay from being pressed too early- the Jackson fever is still too high, let that abate- let them begin the work. In all probability we shall have the same scene to go over, perhaps with 4 or 5 Candidates to be again thrown into the House of Representatives, & new combinations with political leaders- & as new parties gain the ascendancy, new men will be brought into place & power-

When you wrote your Letter, you probably did not foresee the event which has happened & that will probably change your plans-

There is now no office in the gift of the Adm. which you will accept perhaps if it was confered at this period, it would be taken away- Mr. Clay will be suffieiently disposed to give you office if any appty. offers of which we shall avail ourselves as readily & as successfully as if you were here- Although we shall be very glad to see you, I would not recommend you to incur the expense of coming here with that

View- But it is very important that you close without delay all your transactions with the Government- Mr. Bates is fully informed & will attend to your interest- I am very glad to see you from all your difficulties-

It is now too late to do anything with the Indian Dept- That must devolve on the Successors- Mr. Clay has been overloaded with business & is incapable of giving attention to any Dept. but his own. John Sibley is at school ,where he may remain as long as it is advisable for his Education of which you must be the judge- It will be well for you too see him before you make up your mind with Regard to his future Career- So far as I can observe he learns with difficulty, he may hereafter give different indications, but when I observed his painful progress, I regretted that he had commenced Latin- I have some doubts whether he could acquire it with all the labor- I have directed Mr. Bishop to make his own observations- & to Let him pursue it if he thinks he can Succeed- My own opinion is, that he ought to be placed in a Store where he will become a man of business- This is a very delicate subject & intended only for you & with a View to refer the Decision entirely to you- He is so diffident & violent, that I could never draw any thing from him, by which I could form any estimation of his capacity- He made some advance in Latin, but not great & it seemed to me very impertfully (?) - Mr. Bishop will I hope observe him & give us his opinion with Candour. If he thinks on the trial he will succeed, he is directed to Continue his Course of Study, if otherwise he will try him with the other Studies- My own opinion is that if you can place him in a reputable Mercantile House he will be more likely to Succeed in life in that line than in any other, But we shall see-

I hope Lt. See (?) & Family will be pleased with their new Situation, although I think the removal was injudicious. They were pleasantly situated- but we desire change- he will do well in any Situation & if they are not disappointed in the place they will be very happy- I beg you to present my kind regards to Mrs. Sibley and Ann- & remember me with great esteem to your wife.

Yours J. S. Johnson