

## NINE UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF HENRY

### MARIE BRACKENRIDGE

JOHN FRANCIS MCDERMOTT\*

HENRY Marie Brackenridge, in the second and enlarged edition of his *Recollections of Persons and Places in the West* (1868), closed the detailed reminiscences of his early life with his departure from St. Louis in November, 1811. The letter to his friend Walter Forward, dated Washington City, September 29, 1817, which he placed in the appendix, bridged his life story to that moment when he was preparing to set out for Buenos Aires as secretary to a diplomatic mission. His movements until July, 1818, can be traced in his *Voyage to South America*. In the letters of William Baldwin, botanist and surgeon to the mission, we catch a few glimpses of the young man in Wilmington and Baltimore the following winter while he was drawing up his report for publication.<sup>1</sup> After that the printed record of his life is blank except for a final chapter (XXIX) in the *Recollections* in which, skipping a decade, he accounted briefly for his return to St. Louis in 1821 (*sic*), related an anecdote about John Mullanphy [Melanthy, he spelled the name!], and met once more his friend Christopher Schewe, schoolmaster, portrait painter, and teacher of languages. Then in a final paragraph Brackenridge leaped to Pensacola to record the death of this eccentric who had followed him to Florida. The next installment of Brackenridge's life story was the *Letters to the Public* (1832), in which

\* Dr. McDermott, Associate Professor of English, Washington University, St. Louis, author of many books, articles, and reviews, contributed an article on "Henry Marie Brackenridge and His Writings" to the *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* in 1937 and one on "John B. C. Lucas in Pennsylvania" in 1938. —Ed.

1 Baldwin first met Brackenridge in Baltimore in November 1817; of him he wrote to Darlington: "I have no doubt [he] will prove as interesting, as I am very certain he will be amusing, and eccentric, on the voyage. He will lay in (he says) *ample stores for the mind* [Baldwin was then laying in stores of physic for the body]: and I am told that he sings an excellent song.—and can, if we require it, give us the *Speeches* of G x x x x, exactly. His knowledge of the Spanish language may be of much importance. He translated the *Exposition*, of Purreyedon,—which you may have seen in the papers." After the return Baldwin wrote to his friend again that "this mission to South America will derive a great deal of its importance from the talents, acquirements, and indefatigable exertions of Mr. Brackenridge. . . . He has taken up the cause of the South Americans with a zeal which does honor to his head and his heart" (William Darlington, compiler, *Reliquiae Baldwinianae*, Philadelphia, 1843, pp. 250, 273).

he set forth his side of his troubles with Jackson.<sup>2</sup>

The decade of Brackenridge's life from his departure from St. Louis in 1811 until his establishment as judge in Florida can now be filled in somewhat by nine hitherto unpublished letters. The first of these (dated Baton Rouge, May 30, 1814) was in answer to Thomas Jefferson's note of thanks for a copy of the *Views of Louisiana* which the young author had sent to Jefferson earlier in the year.<sup>3</sup> In it the traveler discussed conditions in Louisiana. In Letter II (Baltimore, March 1, 1817), which introduced a Mr. Gilleland to John Vaughan of Philadelphia, we learn that Brackenridge had "committed the sin of writing more books." On returning from South America in July, 1818, Brackenridge settled down to prepare for publication his account of the journey. Through Caesar A. Rodney, chief of mission, he sent a copy of the work to Jefferson, and, on hearing from Rodney that Jefferson had liked the book, he wrote (Letter III) to the former president from Annapolis, February 5, 1820, concerning it. Letter IV, addressed to Rodney, was written from Baltimore, May 15, 1820, after a visit to Washington: it is filled with comment on South American affairs. By September 20 Brackenridge had come to the determination to seek his fortune in the West. "There is no opening here. . . . St. Louis is the place I have chosen," he wrote to Rodney from Baltimore (Letter V). He arrived in Missouri in November, 1820, but the judgeship he hoped for did not materialize, and on April 21, 1821, we find him writing from New Orleans to James Clemens Jr. in St. Louis (Letter VI) describing his trip down the river and giving his first impression of General and Mrs. Jackson and Dr. Bronaugh. Letters VII (to Rodney, November 4, 1821) and VIII (to Clemens, December 14, 1821) deal with Jackson's handling of the Callava affair and with personal matters. Letter IX, written to Clemens from Tarentum, Pennsylvania, more than a quarter of a century later, is a defense against charges that Jack-

2 For Brackenridge's life consult John Francis McDermott, "Henry Marie Brackenridge and his Writings," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, XX, 181-196 (September, 1937); William F. Keller, "A Glimpse of the Life and Letters of Henry Marie Brackenridge," *Ibid.*, XXXVII, 1-17 (March, 1954).

3 This was not the first communication between these two, for on July 25, 1813, Brackenridge had written from Baton Rouge to Jefferson about the "Population and Tumuli of the Aborigines of North America"; this letter Jefferson acknowledged on September 20 and read at the meeting of the American Philosophical Society on October 2. Brackenridge's letter was published in the *Transactions* of the Society in 1818.

son had made about Brackenridge after they had fallen out.<sup>4</sup>

## I

30<sup>th</sup> May 1814  
Baton Rouge

Thomas Jefferson Esq<sup>r</sup>  
Late President U.S.  
Sir,

I take the liberty of expressing the sense of gratitude which I feel, at the flattering notice you have been pleased to take, of the volume lately published by me, on the subject of Louisiana.<sup>5</sup> I am truly sensible, that, it is exceedingly imperfect; and further opportunities, of information, have disclosed many errors. This, induces me, to think of a second edition, should the first, meet with a ready sale. I regard the work, merely as a contribution towards something of a higher kind, which, I hope, may be undertaken by some one, possessed of the necessary qualifications: should this be the case, instead of attempting a second edition, I will be content, to become a correspondent, and a contributor, in this way, as far as my information will allow me.

I might make apologies for the defects which occur in the volume, but I know that according to correct principles these are inadmissible, for no man ought to appear before the publick with his work until completely satisfied that it has received all the finish which it may be in his power to bestow. Indeed, I have done wrong in publishing so soon, but I was actuated [by] a belief that a regular work on such a subject could not be expected from one whose pursuits were of a different nature, and in some degree incompatible with the undertaking. My essays were hastily written, and in an irregular desultory manner, often in the bar-room of a country tavern, or in a boat as I passed along, and not composed in privacy and retirement. They were printed at the distance of two thousand miles from me, the manuscript forwarded by mail generally as it was written.

4 For permission to print I am indebted to the American Philosophical Society for the letter to Vaughn, to the Library of Congress for the letters to Jefferson (Jefferson Papers, Bureau of Rolls and Library, Department of State), and to the Missouri Historical Society for the letters to Rodney and Clemens.

5 *Views of Louisiana, Together with a Journal of a Voyage up the Missouri River*, in 1811 (Pittsburgh, 1814). The first version had been a series of contributions to the *St. Louis Missouri Gazette* in 1811; for them see McDermott, "Henry Marie Brackenridge and his Writings," 188-189.

Louisiana, is at the moment far from being prosperous. The pressure of war has been more severely felt here than in any other state of the Union. The scenes of calamity and distress are very numerous in the city; in the country they are less striking, because for notwithstanding, the diminution in value of property of all kinds, and the numerous sacrifices for the payment of debts, the absolute means of existence are still possessed. It is not the case in the city. The merchants and the banks have but small real capital, and commerce ceasing their credit no longer buoys them up. There have been many failures, and the banks three in number no longer pay their notes; nothing but a mutual sense of danger, and a dread of the possible extent of the mischief prevented their total failure. Bank notes have therefore lost their former currency and many are unwilling to take them unless at a considerable discount. Persons who have thousands in notes can with difficulty purchase provisions in market. New Orleans has undergone a surprising depopulation [?] within the last eighteen months.

I contemplate passing through Virginia this coming autumn or the spring following, and hope to have it [in] my power to [pay] my respects in person at Monticello.

I am, Sir, with great respect

Your most obed<sup>t</sup>

Humble Servant.

H. M. Brackenridge

## II

[to John Vaughan, Philadelphia]

Baltimore March 1<sup>st</sup> 1817

Dear Sir,

I take the liberty of introducing to your acquaintance Mr Gilleland, a townsman a fellow student, and what will recommend him to you, a man of excellent literary attainments. He was bred to the law, but has been for some time past a writer by profession, and has been very favorably known as co-editor of the Weekly Register, and lately of the National Register, published at Washington, from which place he is now on his way to your city. Knowing the pleasure you take in helping a modest son of the muses, I have taken the liberty of throwing him in your way.

I am here labouring hard to climb "the steep that shines afar—,"

but it goes hard with me. From abundant leizure, I have committed the sin of writing more books. I have published a new edition of the "Views of Louisiana,"<sup>6</sup> which I have taken the liberty to dedicate to your friend Correa.<sup>7</sup>

With sentiments of sincere regard,

I remain your

Humble Servant

H. M. Brackenridge

### III

Annapolis Feb. 5. 1820

Thomas Jefferson

Late President of the United States,

Sir,

Mr Rodney as my friend, was so good as to send you a copy of the book I have lately published on South America,<sup>8</sup> and it has afforded me high gratification to learn from him that you have expressed a favorable opinion of it. Being the Chief of the Mission, of which I was the Secretary, I thought that in coming from him, it would bring with it a recommendation which I could not give it. I am but too sensible that in point of execution it bears the mark of haste, and has many blemishes. My habit, is, to think much, to write rapidly, and to polish at leizure; but in this instance, I was compelled by a contract between the book-seller and printer, to complete it in ninety days, when I had not more than forty pages written. It was completed in a little more than two months.

The *truth* has been my guiding star. As a philosopher I endeavoured to contemplate the subject with impartiality. It was unfortunate for me that I was compelled to suffer from some men, who have private interests to gratify, and who have discovered hostility to me, because the accounts which I give tend to falsify theirs, Mr Jones, an enlightened South American, has spoken of the work in the most favorable manner. The American publick has been dreadfully imposed upon by accounts

6 See McDermott, "Henry Marie Brackenridge and his Writings," p. 190.

7 Jose Corea de Serra, Portuguese Minister to the United States.

8 *Voyage to South America, Performed by Order of the American Government, in the years 1817 and 1818, in the Frigate Congress*, 2 vols., Baltimore, 1819. The separate reports of the three commissioners are to be found in *American State Papers, Foreign Affairs*, IV, 217-348, as submitted by the Secretary of State to the 15th Congress (1818).

from South America, but I hope I shall be able to hold up a candle to enable my countrymen to see and judge for themselves. In a second edition, I propose to extend the subject considerably, and shall endeavour to render it more complete.

Permit me, Sir, to express my most ardent wishes for your health and happiness.

I am with great respect  
Your most obed<sup>t</sup> serv<sup>t</sup>  
H. M. Brackenridge

#### IV

[to Caesar A. Rodney]

Baltimore May 15. 1820

D<sup>r</sup> Sir,

Yours was received yesterday on my return from Washington. I saw Halsey<sup>9</sup> and had some conversation with him. As a man of agreeable and gentlemanly manner I like him, but as a man of judgement, and freedom from all improper influences I do not think highly of him. If he thinks to do any thing at Washington he will be disappointed, and his time will be thrown away. On the subject of Pueyrredon and [ms. torn] we of course did not agree. He is connected with Artejas and towards the former there is a personal hostility. He is friendly to San Martin, and is a partisan of Sanatea, and does not think well of Carera.<sup>10</sup> These are strange and confused antipathies and partialities. He may be said to belong to several different fragments of factions. The jumble of parties in Pennsylvania is not unlike that which prevails at Buenos Aires. I think with you that it is more curious than useful to study the nature of these crop factions, and party affections.

Clay has succeeded at last and he is much elated, and I am glad of it on his account, for let Mr Adams friends say of him what they will he is a noble minded American, and we ought not to cast him off for a few faults. The negotiation with the Spanish gov<sup>t</sup> has ended miserably, little to the credit of Mr Adams, who may toil but will catch no fish. A more decided policy would have been best from the first. We really appear to be affraid of our shadow since the last war. [I am] inclined

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Lloyd Halsey, consul at Buenos Aires, 1812-19 (*Dictionary of American Biography*, VIII, 162-163).

<sup>10</sup> Juan Martin de Pueyrredon, Jose Artigas, Jose de San Martin, Jose Miguel Carrera—it was, indeed, a confusion of parties.

to think that Clay's success was not looked for, but I assure you that members of Congress are not satisfied with the policy hitherto pursued, and it is even questionable whether the Senate will ratify the torpid [?] treaty which is beginning to be thought a bad one. Perhaps there will be no disposition on the part of the Cortes to confirm it.<sup>11</sup>

Some are of opinion that Morrillo<sup>12</sup> will declare for the Constitution and by this means gull the good people of South America and induce them to abandon Bolivar. In this he will be mistaken. He must first gull Bolivar and the South American leaders which he cannot do. On the contrary I think the troops of Morrillo will seize the opportunity to desert him. I look to the news from the Spanish Main and from Mexico with much interest. What a glorious thing to make journey to the City of Montezuma without the least obstacle or restraint! We are on the eve of great things. A free intercourse with New Spain would be of incalculable advantage to us.

Duane still continues his old practice of abusing. If he knew how little those whom he abuses care about it he would spare himself the trouble [?]. He is a low venal rascal who will soon or late sink to his proper level in the mire—in fact he is nearly there already.<sup>13</sup>

I am extremely desirous to see the copy of my work which you speak of, and have written for it to M<sup>r</sup> Small. I sent a corrected copy to London [?] with some additional matter, and am surprised [?] that a copy has not been sent to me—<sup>14</sup>

I am respectfully

Yours &c

H. M. Brackenridge

## V

[to Caesar A. Rodney, Wilmington, Delaware]

Baltimore Sep<sup>r</sup> 20. 1820

Dear Sir,

I am sorry I had not the pleasure of seeing you on your return.

11 Henry Clay opposed the Florida Treaty because it did not include Texas. John Quincy Adams was Secretary of State.

12 Pablo Morillo, in Venezuela.

13 He probably refers to William Duane (1760-1835), editor of the Philadelphia *Aurora*.

14 Possibly *Voyage to Buenos Aires, Performed in the Years 1817 and 1818*, London, R. Phillips & Co. 1820—a much abridged version of the original edition (McDermott, "Henry Marie Brackenridge and his Writings," 193).

Since I saw you at this place I have come to the determination of seeking my fortune in the West. There is no opening for me here, and it is a foolish thing to loose [sic] the best years of my life as a miserable hanger on. St Louis is the place I have chosen, and it is possible the gov<sup>t</sup> may give me some appointment there. This winter a law will probably be passed erecting a district court there, the Judgeship, or at least district Attorneyship, may be an object. But Mr Monroe has very properly laid it down as a rule to choose persons on the spot when he can with propriety. A word from you in addition to the obligations you have conferred on me will be thankfully acknowledged.

It is probable I shall be off this week. By delay I may be prevented from obtaining a passage down the river—

The news from Buenos Ayres is worse and worse. Clayton<sup>15</sup> thinks that San Martin will come over and settle the business at last, and perhaps recall Puyriedon and Tagle.<sup>16</sup>

Poor Graham has paid the debt of nature. May he be the inhabitant of a better world.<sup>17</sup>

I am most sincerely

Yours &c

H.M. Brackenridge

## VI

[to James Clemens Jr., St. Louis]

St Louis.<sup>18</sup> April 22. 1821.

Dear Sir—

I arrived here safely after the most rapid voyage I ever made. It seemed more like magic than reality. By good fortune I fell in with General Jackson and family before their arrival here and made arrangements to accompany him to Pensacola.<sup>19</sup> Thus I shall have an opportu-

15 Thomas C. Clayton (1777-1854) of Baltimore.

16 Jose Bernardo Tagle Portecarrero of Peru.

17 John Graham (1774-1820) had served as Chief Clerk of the Department of State, 1807-17, and as one of the commissioners (with Rodney and Theodorick Bland) on the mission to Buenos Aires.

18 An error for New Orleans.

19 Jackson informed Secretary Adams from New Orleans on April 24, 1821, that he had arrived there on the evening of the 22nd. Later that month (April 30), writing to Callava, Jackson referred to "Judge Breckenridge, one of my private Secretaries" (*Correspondence of Andrew Jackson*, ed. by John Spencer Bassett [7 vols, Washington, Carnegie Institution, 1933], III, 49, 51).



nity of visiting that place almost free of expence. What may turn up there I know not, should any lucrative appointment be offered I may accept, if not sufficient inducement offers I shall return to S. Louis by the first opportunity.

I am much pleased with General Jackson. He is exactly the reverse of what one might expect. His manners are highly polished, and his deportment modest and unassuming. He shews none of that fierce energy in private life, or at least it is but rarely called forth. Mrs Jackson is a fine old lady, and I assure you his Secretary Brunaugh<sup>20</sup> does credit to the appointment. So you see I am well pleased with my company.

They complain here that business is dull, that property has fallen, but that rents are still high. The market was never so low for all upper country produce excepting tobacco. The number of ships here from all parts of the world is prodigious and all are taking in cargoes. I have not yet visited the town. Tomorrow I shall make an excursion. From the short time I have been here yet I can say but little of the place—before I close this letter I will gather some further information.

Yours &c.

H. M. Brackenridge

We have had great doings here on the arrival of the general. A splendid publick dinner was given and addresses and compliments without number. I expect in a few days to write you from Pensacola.

Nolte<sup>21</sup> is gone to Europe—but I had no occasion to use the letter which you were so good as to give, although as grateful as if I had—

Yours

HMB.

## VII

[to Caesar A. Rodney, Washington, D. C.]

Pensacola Nov. 4:1821

Dear Sir—

The affair of Col. Callova<sup>22</sup> of which I wrote to you some time ago

20 Dr. James C. Brunaugh, surgeon-general of the Southern Division of the U. S. Army, and at this time serving as secretary to Jackson. He died at Pensacola September, 1822.

21 Vincent Nolte.

22 Jose Callava, Governor of West Florida and commandant of Pensacola. Brackenridge refers to the Vidal case; for a summary of the affair see Marquis James, *The Life of Andrew Jackson* (Indianapolis, Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1938), 321-327. See also Jackson to Secretary of State Adams, Pensacola, August 26, 1821 (*Correspondence of Andrew Jackson*, III, 112-116). The official papers on the transfer of the Floridas are in *American State Papers, Foreign Affairs*, IV, 740-808.

appears to be making some noise, and the old enemies of the General are endeavoring to make a handle of it. But you may rest assured that old Hickory will come out right. The pompous don may find sympathy with Robert Walsh<sup>23</sup> and a few such, but every honest man will be with him. Callova had no official character, and the merit [?] of his case turns upon that fact. Acting on the ground that he had no different rights from other inhabitants, the general pursued the course he ought to have pursued. He is a stern old Roman who does what he thinks his duty requires. I can scarcely imagine a greater contrast than that which exists between his private and public character in the first remarkably forbearing and gentle, in the other, as unyielding and rigid as Cato. He is the most scrupulous in his regard to individual rights of any man I ever knew—and yet he proclaimed martial law at New Orleans, because, as he has repeatedly told me the country itself was to [?] be saved and until that was done it was folly to talk of anything else. But the same man, gave orders to his officers and soldiers, this I have had from his confidential aid, to aid and assist the Court in carrying its orders into effect against himself, in case the populace of N. Orleans should attempt to prevent it—even if he were ordered to prison. Although the Constitution of the U.S. is not in force in this Province, yet it is entitled to respect, and he has been the force to show that respect, for Congress intended little more than a military occupation or possession until it should legislate for it. The only reason why it did not legislate last winter I presume is, that it was not yet in our possession, and we were not sufficiently assured of the kind of legislation necessary.

Judge Fromentin is trying hard to bring himself into notice. He may be gratified. It is astonishing that one so vulnerable, should be so anxious to be brought forward. His character is such as to astonish every American at his being appointed at all. In Louisiana he could not obtain the meanest office.<sup>24</sup>

You will have some difficulty in organizing our territorial government. For the present, it appears to me that it will be unavoidably nec-

23 Robert Walsh (1784-1859), editor of the *Philadelphia National Gazette and Literary Repository*, and contributor to the *Washington National Intelligencer*.

24 Eligius Fromentin, born in France, had been a Jesuit priest until the expulsion of the order from France during the Revolution. He went first to Maryland and then to New Orleans, where he married; in 1812 he was elected to the U. S. Senate. He was named to the Federal bench in Florida over Jackson's opposition. For his relation to the Vidal affair see Secretary Adams to Jackson, Washington, October 26, 1821 (*Correspondence of Andrew Jackson*, 125-129).

essary to make two separate governments, the seats of govern<sup>t</sup> at Pensacola, and at St Augustin. The shape of the Floridas is extremely ill adapted for one government at present. I was at first of opinion that it would be better to keep them united and make the seat of gov<sup>t</sup> at the Mickasukee [?] lake, but on mature reflection I thought differently.

Dr Bronaugh the General's private Sec. is going to Washington for the purpose of settling his [?] accounts, I take the liberty of introducing him to you. His information on the subject of the Flordias will be useful—

I am most sincerely,

Yours &c

H.M. Brackenridge.

### VIII

[to James Clemens Jr., St. Louis]

Pensacola Dec<sup>r</sup> 14<sup>th</sup> 1821—

Dear James—

I reproach myself bitterly with having suffered so long a time to elapse without writing to you— My movement from St Louis, would have been rashness if my success had been different from what it has been. I had resolved not to make up my mind to come here until I saw Gen. Jackson. It so happened that I was the very man he wanted, and he has from that time to this shewn the greatest friendship. The office to which he appointed me has more than met all my current expenses, it is that of Notary and Judge of Probates, or Alcalde, and keeper of the Archives.<sup>25</sup> My practice has been equal to that I left at St Louis, with the difference that I am here what Barton and Bates, and Walsh and Carr are there.<sup>26</sup> I have formed an association with a young man of fine talents, [illegible] for a lawyer, and we sweep everything before us— Finding myself a few hundred dollars ahead I could not resist the temptation to lay out in a purchase, which I am sure will be three or

25 After the cession of the territory was effected on July 17, 1821, Jackson made Brackenridge Alcalde of Pensacola and from 1822 to 1832 he was United States Judge in West Florida.

26 Joshua Barton resigned as Secretary of State of Missouri in 1821 to become U. S. Attorney there. His law partner Edward Bates served as Attorney-General of Missouri. Robert Walsh had earlier and would later fill legal offices in the state. William C. Carr was another early and prominent member of the bar in Missouri. Brackenridge had, of course, known all these men during his two periods of residence in St. Louis.

four years be worth twice as many thousands. There is very little money in the place, the only capital yet consists in houses and lots. The Spaniards about next spring will begin to go off, and will sell for a song—When any person wishes to buy from this people they are sure to ask ten prices, but when they sell of their own accord it is always as a sacrifice.

The business of Calava has made a great noise. I believe the General acted properly. Without pressing the measures he did the papers would be lost. Capt. Call,<sup>27</sup> is gone to N. Orleans to attend to the business of the estate, there are sixteen thousand acres of land on the [illegible] which if we recover we shall be well paid but will have to bear the expense as the heirs of Vidal are poor. Jackson is [a] great man, and I sincerely believe an honest one. When a man acts from pure motives, and actually does good, I am disposed to pass lightly over the *modus operandi*—at the same time without going to the extent of doing evil that good may come of it.

The kindness and friendship I have experienced from you, will ever hold a place in my heart. I have given a little sketch of my affairs to shew that I have good prospects. I do not repent of leaving St Louis. The General has very warmly recommended me to the President and he has given assurances that I shall be remembered in the distribution of offices. A snug judgeship of fifteen hundred or two thousand Dollars, would satisfy my ambition—and for that I would willingly renounce more brilliant prospects at the bar—A few months will determine—I must ask of you as a favor to indulge me a while longer with respect to the amount I owe you—

The kindness I have experience from Mélan [ms. torn], Anderson, McGonigle, and yourself will ever be gratefully remembered<sup>28</sup>—It is probable that but for a fit of disgust at the conduct of McNair,<sup>29</sup> I should have clung to you to the last—But when that man gave as a reason for not appointing me Secreary, that he was afraid his popularity might be affected—I thought it time to go—I dissembled—I was too

27 Captain Richard K. Call, aide-de-camp to Jackson.

28 John Mullanphy and James Clemens Jr. were both St. Louis merchants. The second name may represent Paul Anderson, also a merchant there. A James McGunneagle of the U. S. Army lived in St. Louis at this time.

29 Alexander McNair, first governor of the state of Missouri.

proud to express my resentment for a thing of that nature.

I am most sincerely

Yours

H. M. Brackenridge

IX

[to James Clemens Jr., St. Louis]

Tarentum Jan. 18<sup>th</sup> 1848.

Dear Sir—

A few years ago, I was a candidate for Congress in this district, and my opponents, (the individuals I could never ascertain) addressed a letter to Gen. Jackson, requesting him to give his opinion of me. He replied to them, in the way they wished, and among other things stated that, "he had found me in New Orleans, in a state of destitution and distress, that always feeling a compassion for persons in such situation, he took pity on me, and allowed me to become a member of his family."<sup>30</sup> In reply to this I stated that so far from meeting him in New Orleans, the steam boat in which I was a passenger [from St. Louis], overtook the steam boat in which he was going to New Orleans with his family, and the boat having broken a shaft, he was transferred on board the steam boat in which I was. Soon after this, his secretary Dr Brough, understanding that I was bound for Pensacola, requested me to join the public family of the General, as there was no one of the party who understood Spanish. I agreed to do this, on condition of my expense being borne. I further stated in my letter in reply to the aspersion of General Jackson, that I was not destitute and without funds, and I appealed for this to Mr James Clemens of St Louis, who had favored me with a letter of credit on New Orleans, but which was never used.

As I am desirous to leave a record of these matters, and to sustain what I have asserted, it struck me recently in looking over my papers, that the case would be more complete, if I could obtain your corroboration of the statement made [by] me, to wit, that I was not in a destitute state, that I was not found in New Orleans, and that I had a letter of credit from you, which I never used. If you can recollect any of these things, after so great a lapse of time, I will feel under a great obligation to you, for a letter on the subject. As it is a question of veracity, I know you will not hesitate to do me justice, if the whole matter has not escaped your recollection. I was not a miserable wretch, picked out of a gutter,

30 See Jackson to William B. Lewis, Hermitage, January 20, 1843 in *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson*, VI, 182-183.

as the general would insinuate. Your evidence would put the matter at rest.<sup>31</sup>

I am sincerely

Your &c

H. M. Brackenridge

J. Clemens Esq<sup>r</sup>

<sup>31</sup> See postscript to Letter VI above. At the top of the first page of the 1848 letter appear in another hand (Clemen's?) the words: "last days in April 1821."