

To Richard Keith Call

Washington 18th of May 1829—

Dear Genl

yours of the 28th. ult. has been received, I hope before this reaches you, your dear wife may have been safely delivered, & have presented you with a fine son, or daughter.

I am anxious to hear of your safe return from the Havanna, with such documents as may enable the United States to detect all frauds that has been attempted to be practised against her in Florida—

you will have seen from the Public Journals that we have been ferretting out some gross frauds practised against the United States in the Navy Department by the late 4th. auditor Mr Watkins—The Grand Jury altho 18 out of 23 Mr Seaton of the number are the most violent partizans of the late administration have found a presentment against him, but I have no doubt, if they could they would shield him from disgrace—whether this investigation may not produce facts well calculated to throw around the late Sec. of the Navy, strong suspicions of a participation in the guilt of Watkins, a few days will determine—¹

On the subject of our friend Eaton I will make a few remarks, to shew how you must have been imposed upon by the information you have recd. and how unfounded must be the rumors of a hostile correspondence ever having taken place between Mr Timberlake & Major Eaton—The proof which I now inclose you (Lt Vallette & Thos. Normans letters); with those heretofore refered to must be conclusive to prove to all unprejudiced minds the falshood of the statement—The friendly seperation between Mr Timberlake and his family to which I was an eye witness 1824 This was

conclusive that they parted on the most friendly & confidential terms—The power of att. Executed at Giberalter in Novbr. 1826, shew that until that period, no diminution of friendship & confidence could have taken place—The purchase of the Tobacco pouch & Turkish pipe but two weeks before his death & sent to me “Through his friend Major Eaton,” was conclusive to my mind, that until that period no information could have reached him that could have lessened his confidence in Major Eaton. The copies of two letters from gentlemen of high standing in the Navy, now inclosed—men who sailed with him, and remained with him, until they closed his eyes in death, gives the lie direct, to the information of your secrete informant—nay more, his leaving all his estate to his wife & two children shews that your informant has been imposed upon, or like those that you, & Govr. Houston first obtained your information from; when called on the *other day*, has positively declared, that they neither ever knew, or said any thing disrespectful of Mrs. Timberlake, now Mrs Eaton, or Major Eaton, and I have very little doubt whenever your informant is called upon he will be like those above alluded to—or like my friend Mr. Ely, who got his information, from a clergyman, whose name is not given, & who had his information from an unnamed dead Doctor—and from one of the clerks in the Departments whose name is not recollected, but who I suppose was Mr Henshaw, who it is believed, when he found an enquiry was set on foot, *cut his throat* whether this was in part or in whole the cause, you will understand is only conjecture, as it is believed, he had an agency in circulating this foul & unfounded slander²—I will add one notorious fact—it is this, that Major Eaton by his disinterested friendship to Mr Timberlake, has saved by his advances, out of the wreck of his Mr T. fortune the sum of \$25,000, which is willed to Mrs. Timberlake & her two children³—now let me ask, should any thing but the most positive proof, when the moral character of Eaton stands throughout life so fair; when standing in the relative situation that he did to Mr Timberlake & Major Oneal, be received as evidence even to raise suspicions against him—and my Dear Call *you* have a right to believe that Mrs. T. was not a woman of *easy virtue* your own declarations is *proof of this*—& if you have said any thing to the contrary to Genl Polk or Mr Ely, it is due to yourself & to major Eaton upon the receipt of the Testimony I now enclose you, which as stated to me, are both Gentlemen of high standing in the Navy to say to them, that from proof furnished you lately believe your information was incorrect—you ought at once to reflect how unjustifiable your informants were to give you such information of your friend and enjoin you to secesy—the very injunction, with the slanderous information, *that cannot be true*, is criminal in the highest degree, and the man that would be guilty in one case, would traduce you or me *secretely* if it entered into his wicked designs

As to my female family I exercise no control over them—They have visited Mrs. Eaton—But you are Badly advised as to those who visits Mrs

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Eaton Major Barry is one of his family I well know Mrs. Hamilton & her daughter visited her—Miss McLean from Dalaware by the instructions of her father visited her, and The lady of Major Bender, visited her, & all respectable strangers visit her as I am [informed] I happened to be present at the parting between her and Mrs. Bender which was most affectionate & friendly, & the character of Mrs. Bender stands as fair as any lady in america⁴—Justice to truth & to my friend, & your friend, Major Eaton requires this statement—Major Eaton has taken a proper stand & his firmness, we both know, are equal to the task, & all my wish is that my friends may not in the investigation, be found acting incorrectly or on *secrete* information, the weapon of all detraction.

AL draft, DLC (37).

1. On May 16 and 18, a Washington grand jury issued presentments against Tobias Watkins. William Winston Seaton (1785–1866) was co-editor of the Washington *National Intelligencer*.

2. John H. Henshaw, a Massachusetts-born Treasury clerk, killed himself on April 22. Reports also attributed his suicide to rumored involvement in frauds against the government or to despondency over the prospect of removal from office.

3. Mary Virginia (b. 1819) and Margaret Rosa (1825–55).

4. Postmaster General Barry lived with the Eatons. Mrs. Hamilton was likely Mary Morris Hamilton (1790–1869), wife of James A. Hamilton. Rebecca Wells McLane (1813–93) was the eldest daughter of Louis McLane. George Bender (c1785–1865) of Massachusetts, a brevet major serving in the quartermaster general's office, married Mary Briscoe of Washington in 1816.