D450(6)

1809, May 4

Letter, D.C. [Dr. Dennis Claude], New Orleans, to Abram Claude, Annapolis, concerning the duel he is to fight with Capt. [Winfield] Scott.

New Orleans May 4th 1809.

Dear Brother

Should this ever reach you warmth of motion will have fled the hand which penned it, the mind which dictates will have ceased to hold converse here below, & joined the spirits of our fathers; the reflection that when we have bid adieu to this temporary scene, we shall be reunited to these dear departed long lost friends, is indeed a source of ineffable delight. I must retrate my imagination which is hurrying me to far from the subject of my letter.

The insolence of a Capt Scott of our Corps has compelled me to call him to the field; for tho never an advocate for the practice of dueling, I think there are circumstances in the present state of society which imperiously demand a resort to it, & such circumstances exist in the present case, he must recant some insolent expressions of his, or answer with the pistols voice.

Were I to pass over some expressions of his, I should be under the imputation of cowardice, & beneath that ignominious epithet I can not live, & you I am sure would infinitely prefer seeing me fall in defence of my honor, than by basely sacrificing it preserve a life no longer worthy a moments care; for without reputation existence must become burthensome.

After deliberate reflection I see no cause to repent any step I have taken in this affair, however I may regret the necessity which caused them. I fervently hope & confidently believe you will

will view the subject in the same light, & console yourselves for the temporary loss of a brother & society, with the reflection that tho his life has not been brilliant, it has been stained with no vicious act & that he leaves a reputation unsullied with the imputation of one dishonorable deed. My greatest concern my dear Abram is to leave you surrounded with difficulties, that I can offer you no assistance more substantial than advice. For different are I know you regime but an unfeeling fate ordains that we should battle through. Now dare I say unfeeling fate, it may be the dispensations of an all wise providence, whose ways we cannot scan, & I am inclined to burst out in the language of a favorite poem of our younger days.

As purest gold is most severely tried
Even so perhaps is the distinguished mind;

And if we pass this trial & come thro unblemished, rewards for our virtuous exertion must be somewhere obtained, but it is not given us to lift up the veil of futurity & have a view of that country from whose bourne no traveller returns, the imagination here is bewildered & lost in her own intricacies.

To you I leave the painful duty of unfolding to our mother & aunt, the tale of my fate. Assist them dear Abram in the first moments of your own grief. For them I feel all that a son can feel but circumstances are irresistable, the longest life is but a few moments gained or lost. Let Nicholas & all our relatives & friends know that their memory was cherished to my latest breath.

And now my dear brothers I must bid you a last & fond adieu —

D Claude

PS Capt Peter my friend on this occasion will be round in a short time & to him you will find a substantial friend. DC

Messrs John & Abm Claude,
Annapolis
Maryland

Mr Abram Claude
Annapolis
Maryland

Mail 3

Henry