Dialectic Hall, June 23, 1836

Whether should the suffrages of a free people be bestowed on one distinguished for his military services—rather than on one distinguished for his labors in the cabinet?

Mr. President,

The gentleman who has just addressed the house, after a slight review of the happy condition of our as yet infant though prosperous republic, has with great propriety dwelt most fully upon the great importance of the office of its chief magistrate. Of the extreme care & circumspection to be exercised in its selection. As the last great experiment of democracy, its course is ever watched with anxious solicitude, by the advocates of true liberty, as the "bright autumnal star," whose ascent or whose fall will in severely decide the momentous question, whether the people are capable of self-government... As the beacon that guides the few rising republics of the present day, which its rays have warmed into life, its fate will ever embrace their fortunes. To ensure perpetuity to our free institutions, prosperity & happiness to our country, is the great end which we have in view in filling the responsible office of President. But how, as to the most proper means of securing this great object; I am compelled to differ with the gentleman. Our Chief magistrate ought in my opinion to be a military character. The combination of the civil & military powers of a government constitute the basis of its national freedom, though they when united, procure for us—peace, health, happiness & security; yet when viewed apart—their claims to equal contribution are by no means indefensible. A wise civil administration is indeed indispensably necessary to the prosperity of a government—but without that security, which is alone procured by military power—the personal safety of its citizens would ever continue a source of uneasiness.