

contemptible hypocrisy, by pretending to presume that all those theorems are familiar to your Excellency, exercised and occupied as you have been for many years, in the responsibilities and duties of political affairs. For the satisfaction of your Excellency concerning these technical inquiries, I presume to suggest a reference, if necessary, to the mathematical authorities of *Yale, Virginia, and West Point.*

Finally, Sir, before I undertake the proposed examination, I must express the hope, that a consideration of the nature of my attempt will tend, with additional force, to impress upon your Excellency, a deep conviction of the *incalculable benefits resulting to mankind, in every conceivable department of human affairs, from the patronage, diffusion, and protection of science.* I shall rejoice, if enabled hereafter to believe, that, by any observation contained in or suggested by this letter, the attention of your Excellency, or that of any other influential man, has been more closely directed to the promotion of that glorious object.

But I cannot incur the deep culpability of neglecting to inform your Excellency, and all my fellow-men, that mathematical science, like every other human pursuit, has its vanities, deceits, and snares. More especially in later times, a race of men has appeared upon the field of demonstration, the devious meteoric aspect of whose intellectual career has induced me to apply to such individuals the epithet, *Formularian*, as a distinctive appellation. These men *shun definitions, and refuse to explore first principles*, they conceal ambiguity by apparently precise, but latently equivocal words; they accomplish, on *formulae*, unusual and curious transformations, by unjustly, though plausibly, *generalizing the ordinary rules of operation*, like certain other philosophers, who, having once discovered that a circumstance is *very generally true*, immediately arm themselves with such a discovery, as a weapon wherewith to *deny the reality of every case of exception which may afterwards occur.* The absurdities of these men are sometimes harmless and amusing; but unhappily, too often, more calamitous results ensue. Among this visionary tribe, *La Place* appears to be pre-eminent, in