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Title: Letter from James Buchanan to Francis Pickens

Date: January 18, 1844

Location: I-Friends-2003-2

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Washington 18 January 1844.

My dear Sir,

I have received your kind letter & most cordially reciprocate the friendly feelings which it manifests for myself. I am glad that you approve of my withdrawal. Mr. Van Buren never was, either my first or second choice for the Presidency as you will know; and I have never concealed this opinion. When, however, it became clear at the length that he would be nominated, - nay that he had already been nominated in fact if not in form; I felt it to be a duty which I owed to my Country & my party to withdraw from the hopeless contest. My continuance in the field could have produced no effect but injury to my party, my friends & myself. God knows what may be the result of the next Presidential election. Should the Whigs prevail & Clay be

electd, it may be long way long before Democratic principles shall regain the ascendancy. From his very nature, however, he ~~would~~ ^{might} carry Whig principles to such an excess in practice as to destroy his party.

I can scarcely venture an opinion as to the vote of Pennsylvania. I think, however, that when the war begins to be fairly waged, & the forces are marshalled, the old Democratic spirit will rise & conquer. In his principles, ^{I trust} they will forget their objections to the man.

I confess I am alarmed by your suggestions. I presume that the developments to which you refer relate to Mr. Calhoun's forthcoming letter. I have only heard vague reports as to what it contains.

The present three days wonder is the letter of Mr. Reeves. He can carry little or no strength with him; but still it is a symptom that he believes Mr. Clay to be in the ascendant. Those who know him best say that he has an unerring instinct for discovering the strong side. How a man who has all his life been opposed to a Bank, distribution & all the other federal heresies proceeding from a latitudinarian construction of the Constitution can now turn round & support the great apostle of all these doctrines, I am utterly at a loss to comprehend.

Hon: F. W. Pickens

from your friend
very respectfully
James Buchanan

Jan
1844

James Buchanan

Am: J. W. Pickens
Edgefield C. H.
South Carolina



25. BUCHANAN, JAMES President.

Autograph Letter Signed, 2 full pages, 4to, Washington, 18 January 1844. To F. W. Pickens, later South Carolina secession leader and Confederate Governor. With integral address leaf franked by BUCHANAN.

Significant letter on 1844 Presidential politics with mention of Van Buren, Clay and Calhoun. As former President Van Buren demonstrated political strength, Buchanan, an early aspirant for the office, withdrew prematurely. Later, Van Buren's failure to support Texas annexation (which would have alienated his anti-slavery support) weakened him and allowed the nomination of dark horse James K. Polk. Alluded to here also was John C. Calhoun's withdrawal from the Democratic nomination contest but unsuccessful try to stay in the race as an independent. Pennsylvania Senator Buchanan, in the uncertain atmosphere of the time, hoped to gain as a loyal party man, the basic theme in this letter: *"I am glad that you approve of my withdrawal. Mr. Van Buren never was, either my first or second choice for the Presidency...and I have never concealed this opinion. When, however, it became clear as the light that he would be nominated...I felt it to be a duty which I owed to my country & my party to withdraw from the hopeless contest. My continuance...could have produced no effect but injury to my party, my friends, & myself. God knows what may be the result of the next Presidential election. Should the Whigs prevail & Clay be elected, it may be very long before Democratic principles shall regain the ascendancy. From his very nature, however, he might carry Whig principles to such an excess in practice as to destroy his party. I can scarcely venture an opinion as to the vote of Pennsylvania...however...when the war begins to be fairly waged, & the forces are marshalled, the old Democratic spirit will rise & conquer. In his principles, I trust they will forget their objections to the man. I confess I am alarmed by your suggestions. I presume that...you refer...to Mr. Calhoun's forthcoming letter. I have only heard vague reports as to what it contains..."*

Seal tear, normal wear, one slight water stain.