

# Dickinson College Archives & Special Collections

<http://archives.dickinson.edu/>

## Documents Online

**Title:** Letter from Augustus Schell to Jeremiah Black (Copy)

**Date:** July 28, 1863

**Location:** I-SpahrB-1959-9

### Contact:

Archives & Special Collections  
Waidner-Spahr Library  
Dickinson College  
P.O. Box 1773  
Carlisle, PA 17013

717-245-1399

[archives@dickinson.edu](mailto:archives@dickinson.edu)

New York July 28. 1863.

Dear Sir:

You will find below, an extract from a letter published in the London Observer, on the 9<sup>th</sup> of February 1862, subscribed with initials T. W.

The signature is known to be that of Mr Thurlow Weed of Albany who was at the time, in London.

"In February, Major Anderson commanding Fort Moultrie, Charleston Harbor, finding his position endangered, passed his Garrison by a prompt and brilliant movement over to the stronger Fortress of Sumter, whereupon Mr Floyd, Secretary of War, much excited, called upon the President to say, that Major Anderson had violated express orders and thereby seriously compromised him (Floyd) and that, unless the Major was immediately remanded to Fort Moultrie he should resign the War office." The Cabinet was assembled directly, — Mr Buchanan explaining the embarrassment of the Secretary of War, remarked that the act of Major Anderson would occasion exasperation in the South, he had told Mr Floyd that as the Government was strong, forbearance

towards "erring brethren" might win them back to their allegiance" and that that officer might be ordered back.

After an ominous silence the President enquired how the suggestion struck his Cabinet? Mr Stanton just now called to the War office but then Attorney General, answered. - "That course Mr President ought certainly to be regarded as most liberal towards "erring brethren", but while one member of your Cabinet has fraudulent acceptances for millions of dollars afloat, and while the confidential clerk of another - himself in Carolina teaching rebellion - has just stolen \$900,000 from the Indian Trust Fund, the experiment of ordering Major Anderson back to Fort Moultrie would be dangerous. But if you intend to try it, before it is done, I beg that you will accept my resignation. "And mine," added the Secretary of State, Mr Black. "And mine also," said the Postmaster General, Mr Holt. "And mine too" followed the Secretary of the Treasury, Gen Dix. This of course opened the bleared eyes of the President, and the meeting resulted in the acceptance of Mr Floyd's resignation."

Inasmuch as you were a member of Mr Buchanan's Cabinet, and one of the persons alluded to among the members of his Cabinet who dissented from the proposition, alleged to have been made by Mr Floyd, I have thought it not improper to call upon you to state whether the subject matter of Mr Weed's communication is or is not true. As for myself I do not believe it to be true, and regard it as one of the numerous slanders, which have been disseminated to reflect discredit upon the late excellent President of the United States. I shall esteem it a favor, if you will inform me by letter of the precise circumstances attending the action of Mr B's Cabinet at the time of the transaction referred to, if any such took place, to the end that the public may be truthfully informed of the actual occurrence. I have written this letter without the knowledge of Mr Buchanan, solely for the purpose that the public record of Mr Buchanan's Administration may be vindicated from a charge, which, those who know him as you and I do, cannot but feel, has originated from personal

31.

or political malice.

Yours very respectfully  
Augustus Schell.

Hon. J. S. Black.