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Title: Letter from Jeremiah Black to Alexander McClure

Date: August 7, 1883

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ALS, 7 pp., 4to, Aug. 7th, 1883. Written Brockie - Bar in pencil, on his sick bed twelve days before his death. A criticism of Geo. Ticknor Curtis's Life of Buchanan. Roselia Aug. 7. 1833. Col All deliver Ty Dear he was for a statued tweele uge strew at the of Heere publiced ad used send of tuel shool utt aguapus enan bus zotal at ans ult of ilound at studies uppealed ledues plueton tout removed haber lufurad a dit de noitrese et ess jungs protonoment in seered in stat of glandlid duanisul at snad flet um in liane glacel slike to the the the denil eller bedent want & smittenes enjustes tifundthe. Mes for and billing presioned in made somerflues tivilgens theon and me & huet Hood sin carpon is emtiralle puillen ducation de

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Col. A. K. McClure, My Dear Sir

I have meant for a week past to write you about Curtis's book but I have been so healthy and so lazy and have enjoyed the <u>dolce far niente</u> so much for the whole summer that nothing roused me to exertion. It is a painful break in the monotony of my luxurious illness to take my lead pencil in my left hand and hold it while I trace these dull lines

I thought of saying something in praise of Curtis's good faith and vivacity in which I have the most implicit confidence. I have not read his book but I am sure it contains nothing about me or

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anybody else that he does not believe to be true and if any of his conclusions be unsavory they will be easily corrected. He confided to me his general plan of treating the subject and showed me some chapters in it. It differed entirely from the conception I had formed of a good biography of Buchanan. His object was to do Buchanan as perfect justice as he could and to dedicate his memory as effectually as possible by a fair and honest presentation of the facts specially leaning on that single point. But he told me that he would not antagonize any human being unless it became absolutely necessary. He did not

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say so that I needled but I gathered that he intended to be sparing of his praise as well as his blame. At first he did not think it would be necessary to speak of the differences between the President and the cabinet or any changes of attitude which took place in consequence but simply show what was the final determination and prove it to be right. I was entirely satisfied with this method of treating the subject so far as my own part of it was concerned and I told him that Judge Cadwallader had made up his mind not to mention the name of any cabinet officer

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But I could not help assure that I thought he would find it impracticable to ignore facts which had already become public property and which in the opinion of many were important to the formation of that just estimate which he was anxious to make of Mr. Buchanan's character: he must indicate him (and he could do it) on the real case without better <u>suppressio veri</u> or <u>suggestio falsi</u>. This became his own view and he has carried it out doubtless with ability and discretion, but at the same time with as little departure from his original plan as possible. I dare say he has not spoken either well or ill offense but he

has left me without cause of complaint on either score.

I do not of course mean to criticize a book that I have not read but when I do look at it you may expect me to say something about it and about your remarks concerning it and the subject of it. You have intended to be just perhaps gracious but you do Buchanan great wrong as I shall undertake to show at the proper time if you permit me.

But your paper of this morning contains a notice of the assault which Jefferson Davis will make upon me in your next issue. May I expect the use of your columns for a reply if a

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reply seems to be necessary? You manifestly think that you are about to publish a thing which has a good deal of significance to me and I do not believe you will refuse me the chance of being heard but I have not the remotest idea what Mr. Davis will say or can say about me, my acts, or my record which can give occasion for controversy. Still he may have mused in his mind some idea which has at least grown to a size which looks formidable. I can only wait and see. I do not think that his arrow is poisoned but it may be

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sharp and sent home with a good deal of force.

Yours very truly, J. S. Black