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Title: Letter from Jeremiah Black to Alexander McClure

Date: August 7, 1883

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BLACK, Jeremiah S. Secretary of State.
ALS, 7 pp., 4to, Aug. 7th, 1883. Written
in pencil, on his sick bed twelve days before
his death. A criticism of Geo. Ticknor Cur-
tis's Life of Buchanan.

Brockie = Bdr
~~Brockie~~ Aug. 7, 1883

Col A. M. Delaney
~~My dear Sir~~
~~My dear Sir~~

I have meant for a
week past to write you about Curtis's
book but I have been so healthless
and so busy and have engaged the
most of my time as this year as
well as summer that nothing caused
me to write. It is a painful
break in the monotony of my
business to take my
pencil in my hand to
~~write to you~~ and what it will
send this week

I thought of saying something
in praise of Curtis's book but
and in view of the
most implicit confidence I have
and read his book but I can see
of Curtis's book about me a

I had believed I had as much
 as to mention in that country
 there as a rising ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~country~~
 as his name. At first he did not
~~show to think it would~~
 be necessary to speak of the dis-
 tinction between the President
 of General and a General in the
 sense which took place in some
 other words of the President
 was not intended to signify the
 same sense. This is what I
 thought earlier with other
 names be up as together with
 I was concerned that
 was intended to be that
 was not intended to be that
 was not intended to be that

has left me without cause of com-
plaint on either score -

I do not of course mean
to enter a caveat that I have
~~not been consulted~~ but
but when I do look at it you may
expect me to say something a-
bout it and about your remarks
concerning it and the subject of
it. You have intended to be just
perhaps ignorant but you do
know that you are wrong and
shall endeavor to show it
at the proper time if you permit
me.

But your paper of this morning
contains ^{a notice of} ~~an advertisement~~ of
the sort which Jefferson Davis
will make upon me in your next
~~issue~~ issue. I expect the use
of your columns for a reply to

I have been led to think
 that you might 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 faintest idea
 what Mr. Davis will say or can
 say about me, my acts, or my
 views which can give occasion
 for controversy. Still he may
 have some views on some
 one which had at last given
 to a way which looks formidable
 I can only wait and see. I do
 not know but that I might be
 pleased to try to answer

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Shop and sent home with a
few dollars of money

I am very truly

Yours

W. P. Black

~~Wm. A. McCall~~

~~Wm. A. McCall~~

[Brockie?] Aug. 7. 1883

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 dolce far niente 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 needed 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 suppressio veri or suggestio falsi. 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

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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