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Title: Letters from James Buchanan to Mr. Lane and James L. Reynolds

Date: 1853-1854

Location: MC 1998.10

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Whealland, near Lancaster 30 July 1853.

Gentlemen/ I believe I do not owe a debt in the world, except those mentioned in page 11 of my Receipt Book. Should claims be made, Miss Hetty can give you the necessary information.

I have given Mr. Hager a written authority to pay the interest wt. will be due on his Bond for \$10,000 & mortgage on the 1 April next to James B. Henry. My brother Edwards is to receive 7 per cent interest semi-annually on my Bonds to him for \$8000.

Pages 6 & 7. & pages 8, 9 & 10 of my Receipt Book, are the only material pages in regard to my Stocks, Loans, Bonds, Mortgages &c. Whatever may be deemed proper for the cultivation & improvement of the land at Whealland & repairs of the house ~~are~~^{is} to be advanced by you to Miss Hetty.

My pew Rent in the Presbyterian Church is to be paid from this date. —

My State & County Tax for 1853, ^{as well as Harriets & James B. Henry's} have been paid; but I believe not my School & Road ^{School & Road Tax} Tax. Harriets tax is to be paid without charge to her. James B. Henry's is to be paid & charged to him in page 2. I have given notice to B. H. Longenecker the Collector that James B. Henry resides in Philadelphia & is no longer to be taxed in this County. Please to look to this. Also, to the care of Harriet who will not reside at Whealland. — James Buchanan

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James Buchanan

Messrs Lane & Reynolds

Legation of the United States,

London 10 November 1854.

My dear Sir,

I have received your favor of the 23^d Instant & that of Mr. Sanderson of the 24th & intend this letter to be an answer to both.

Our defeat has indeed been overwhelming; but it could not have been unexpected. There are always consolations in misfortune & I trust that Col. Frayer has irrevocably gone over to the Whigs & ~~the~~ ^{no} Know-nothings. What a relief this will be! It is impossible that a Secret Political Society founded on religious persecution & hostility to the equal rights of our foreign Citizens can long continue powerful. It may, however, in the mean time, do great injury. I feel proud of the course of the Democratic party in opposing this new and vigorous foe from the commencement. That great party will surely rise again. Nothing can ever long keep it down.

except a departure from its essential & time honored principles.

I have received any number of letters on the subject of the next Presidency & have answered all of them that I was not & would not be again a Candidate for that office. In this declaration, I have been uniform ever since the election of General Pierce. Some ask me if I would refuse to be the nominee of the National Convention in case the Country should feel & voluntarily call upon me to assume this position. My answer is that such an event is so improbable, that it would be the most extravagant vanity in me to deem it possible, & ~~that is such an almost impossible contingency,~~ ^{therefore} I have waived any answer on the subject.

Then again some write to me advising me to return home next year & others advise most strongly that I should remain abroad, - all with a view to the Presidency.

Now from my very heart I say - that I shall not be a Candidate for the Presidency, & would not wish to become President, even if the office were voluntarily tendered to me by the Democracy. For me it has lost its charm.

In answer to a letter from Mr. Sedell my much valued
friend I ~~wrote~~ ^{to day} have written by this Steamer, as follows:

"My principal reason for writing you at present is to answer
your inquiry as to whether I "intend returning to the United
States next Summer". Such is certainly my intention. I shall
~~have~~ have performed the duties of this Legation, according to
my engagements with the President, two years on the 23^d August
next; & should my life be spared, it is my purpose, shortly
afterwards, to return home. Were I a candidate for the
Presidency, which you have long since known I would
not be, or had the most remote idea of again placing
myself in this most unenviable & disagreeable position,
your advice would doubtless be sound. As it is I feel no
apprehensions from breathing the "malarious atmosphere"
which you have so graphically described. Besides, I am
heartily tired of my situation. It is one of great & incessant
labor chiefly in small matters, without the probability of
rendering important services to my Country. I might mention
the inadequacy of my salary to my supports; but this
would not weigh a feather against a fair prospect of being
essentially useful to the American people. In truth I long
for the quiet & retirement of Wheeland.

I was sixty three years of age on the 23^d April last; & shall, therefore, should Providence prolong my days, have nearly completed my seventieth year at the end of the next Presidential term. I do not spring from a long lived family, but ~~the~~ reverse; & I now begin to feel that my health is yielding. In my opinion, it would be extremely hazardous to select any man of my age as President. Our earlier Presidents completed their service at sixty six; & this, under ordinary circumstances, furnishes a salutary precedent. I do trust that valued friends like yourself who have stood by me in the worst of times, & especially yourself, will be satisfied with my decision. I have never concealed it from you or them since the election of General Pierce.

Thus have I written to Mr. Slidell & I have thought that you Sanderson & Swan ought to know it. These are my real sentiments.

The people here are uniformly kind in my intercourse with them

Harriet is to leave New York for Liverpool, in
the Atlantic, under the special charge of Captain
West, either on Saturday the 15th or Saturday the 29th
of April. The Captain, when last in Liverpool, did
not know on which of these two days he would leave;
but was to inform Harriet of it immediately on his
return to New York. I wrote to her that I would
request you to take & pay for her passage; but upon second
thoughts shall apply to Mr. Corcoran of Washington for
this purpose, in whose hands, I have the necessary funds.

I do not know what to make of our friend Toney.
What thinks you? Does he desire to quarrel with me? Or is this
surely he could have no object beneficial to himself in any
manner, as I am not & shall not be in any persons way.
I shall make a quotation from his late strange letter to me,
as the name of Mr. Reynolds is mentioned in it.

Speaking of his re-election, he says, "You would be
surprised to see how I have been congratulated. Hundreds of

Letters have been sent to me, - from all parts of the Union -
from many parts of Europe, - from every body except James
Buchanan. What a text that would be for the Lincolntonian
& Keystone!!

"I made Reynolds & Malhot who were here yesterday
stare when I told them you had not congratulated me on
my election & were sorely exercised about Parker's removal ^{of} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~of~~

Now I cannot believe that Reynolds & Malhot would
have opened their eyes very widely with astonishment if I
even had omitted to speak specially of Col: Forney's sweep
to him ^{see} in the course of our correspondence. But I made
no such omission. The following is the introduction of a

very friendly letter to him dated on the 13th December.

My dear Sir / "Long looked for come at last". I have received
your welcome letter of the 28th ultimo: & now feel the
greatest anxiety to learn that you had been re-elected Clerk.
I trust & believe we shall receive this gratifying intelligence
with the President's message on Monday next."

I thus congratulated Col: Forney in advance. We
did receive the gratifying intelligence on the succeeding Monday:
& the burden of his complaint against me is that I did

after my first letter
not sit down immediately & write him a second letter, ^{at} ~~upon~~
upon the same subject!

I was very much annoyed & mortified at Parker's removal.
He was appointed by Col: Fomes on my special request; & for years
has been my steady, active & influential friend in Virginia. He is
a good writer & on terms of intimacy with Wise & my other leading
friends in that State. I know him to be a thorough gentleman.
He may have become dissipated in his habits since I left home, &
he may not have well performed his duties as Librarian. About
these things I know nothing. My offence in this matter is,
that I have expressed no opinion whether Fomes was right or
wrong in the removal. I have avoided this to Virginia friends
& have avoided it to Col: Fomes. Why should I be called
upon at the distance of 3000 miles from the scene of action,
upon contradictory statements, to volunteer an opinion ex post facto.
Why should I thus be asked to offend a body of ^{as soon} friends in Virginia
as every man could boast of. But enough of this.

In the same letter, in reference to the establishment of the
new paper at Harrisburg, - he asks me, - "Do you think I can
to be trusted as the Editor of a Buchanan paper." ^{or ye ye, with}
other matters in the same spirit.

To this I answer: "If you mean by a 'Buchanan paper',
one that is to advocate me as a candidate for the Presidency,
I should regret its establishment. You have been early &

consistently informed, without reserve, of my determination
never again to become a candidate for that office; & every days
reflection, if this were possible, adds strength to my resolution.
If, on the other hand, the new paper without reference to myself,
is to be an organ of the true Democracy of the State, I have its
establishment & congratulate that Democracy in having enlisted
your eminent editorial abilities in their support. Whilst my own
public & official life will terminate with my present mission, I
shall ever, so long as I may live feel the deepest interest in the
cause & be always ready & willing to serve my friends individually
whenever circumstances may place this in my power.

Though of a confident temper, I could not fail to have
observed a change in Col: ^{our} Torrey, since my advocacy of
Campbell for a seat in the Cabinet. I owe him many
obligations & have ever treated him with the utmost kindness, &
shall never treat him in a different manner. I confess, however,
I should be very glad to know your opinion as to whether it is his
intention to break with me. He is under many obligations to
President Pierce who, I think, deserves his support for a re-nomination
To this, he knows, I have no objections.

I have not time at the present moment to write you
any more. Please to remember me, in kind terms, to all our
friends not forgetting Miss Betty, Mr. Regard & Mr. ^{James} Patterson of
Lytle Britain.
Ever your friend,
James Buchanan
Misses Law & Reynolds. P.S. Please to remember me, in the very kindest terms,
to my good & valued friend, Jonas Bachman

Legation of the United States
London 10 November 1854

My dear Sir/

I have received your favor of the 23d Instant & that of Mr. Sanderson of the 24th. & intend this letter to be an answer to both.

Our defeat has indeed been overwhelming; but it could not have been unexpected. There are always consolations in misfortune & I trust that Col: Frazer has irretrievably gone over to the Whigs & ~~No~~ Nonthings. What a relief this will be! It is impossible that a secret political Society founded on religious persecution & hostility to the equal rights of our foreign Citizens can long continue powerful. It may, however, in the mean time, do great injury. I feel proud of the course of the Democratic party in opposing this new issue vigorously from the commencement. That great party will surely rise again. Nothing can ever long keep it down

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of being essentially useful to the American people. In truth, I long for the quiet & retirement of Wheatland.

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“I made Reynolds & Mathiot who were here yesterday stare when I told them you had not congratulated me on my election & were sorely exercised about Parker’s removal” &c &c &c

Now I cannot believe that Reynolds & Mathiot would have opened their eyes very widely with astonishment if I even had omitted to speak specially of Col: Forney’s success to himself in the course of our correspondence. But I made no such omission. The following is the introduction of a very friendly letter to him dated on the 13th. December.

“My dear Sir/

“Long looked for come at last”. I have received your welcome letter of the 28th. ultimo: & now feel the greatest anxiety to learn that you had been re-elected Clerk. I trust & believe we shall receive this gratifying intelligence with the President’s message on Monday next”.

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consistently informed, without reserve, of my determination never again to become a candidate for that office; & every days reflection, if this were possible, adds strength to my resolution. If, on the other hand, the new paper without reference to myself, is to be an organ of the true Democracy of the State, I hail its establishment & congratulate that Democracy in having enlisted your eminent editorial abilities in their support. Whilst my own public & official lips will terminate with my present mission, I shall ever, so long as I may live feel the deepest interest in the cause & be always ready & willing to serve my friends individually whenever circumstances may place this in my power.

Though of a confiding temper, I could not fail to have observed a change in Col: Forney ever since my advocacy of Campbell or a seat in the Cabinet. I owe him many obligations & have ever treated him with the utmost kindness, & shall never treat him in a different manner. I confess, however, I should be very glad to know your opinion as to whether it is his intention to break with me. He is under many obligations to President Pierce who, I think, deserves his support for a renomination. to this, he knows, I have an objection.

I have not time at the present moment to write you any more. Please to remember me, in kind terms, to all our friend not forgetting Miss Hetty, Mr. Reigart & Mr. James Patterson of [~~one~~
~~word illegible~~] Little Britain.

Ever your friend
James Buchanan

Messrs Lane & Reynolds

P. S. Please to remember, in the very kindest terms, to my good & valued friend, Jonas Bachman