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## Documents Online

**Title:** Letter from James Buchanan to John Reynolds

**Date:** 1827-1842

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Dear Sir,

Washington 9 January 1827.

I shall enclose to you a report made to the House of Representatives by the Secretary of the Navy upon the subject of water rotted hemp which I think you ought to publish. As I have taken a great deal of trouble in this matter I would thank you to mention my name as the member on whose motion the resolution was adopted which gave birth to the report.

Mr. Adam Hoar of Salisbury Township furnished between 7 & 8 cut. of hemp mentioned by the Commissioners of the navy & the person at whose instance they agreed to make the purchase was myself. It is somewhat strange they did not mention my name. You may do so, together with that of Mr. Hoar if you think proper.

I was at the Jackson dinner yesterday & have a bad head ache this morning: of which I suppose you can readily conjecture the cause. It passed off very well. Judging from the news we have from every quarter, the Presidential contest is ended - unless some cause should arise to produce a re-action. It is now by no means certain that Mr. Adams will receive the entire vote of New England.

The administration men seemed to be in a state of despondency - until a ray of hope burst upon them yesterday from Pennsylvania. The proceedings of the Adams Salisbury convention has had a visible effect upon them

Spinks. It was well calculated to have an imposing effect abroad.

X A word for your private ear. Jackson will certainly be elected, but it will be by a party which has no common bond of Union but his name; & ~~oppositon to~~ <sup>oppositon to</sup> the administration. It will probably fall to pieces a short time after the Presidential election; - and then "the Devil take the hindmost". Our <sup>present</sup> only danger is that we have got strong too soon - & may act impudently during the present Session. Colonel Drayton went a great length in debate on Monday last, without the least cause. To get up an excitement on the slave question at present would be to play into the hands of our enemies in Pennsylvania. I shall prevent it if possible. I believe the best interests of the Country require that Mr. Adams should not be re-elected; yet I think we may calculate upon strong political topics for a few years to come.

X  
Please to present my best respects to all inquiring friends not forgetting Mr. Montgomery, & my most respectful compliments to Mr. Reynolds & believe me to be your sincere friend.

John Reynolds Esq

James Buchanan

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I shall enclose to you a report made to the House of Representatives by the Secretary of the Navy upon the subject of water rotted hemp which think you ought to publish. As I have taken a great deal of trouble in this matter I would thank you to mention my name as the member on whose motion the resolution was adopted which gave birth to the report. Mr. Adam Hoar of Salisbury Township furnished between 7 & 8 cwt. of hemp mentioned by the commissioners of the navy & the person at whose instance they agreed to make the purchase was myself. It is somewhat strange they did not mention my name. You may do so, together with that of Mr. Hoar if you think proper.

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spirits. It was will calculated to have an imposing effect abroad.

A word for your private ear. Jackson will certainly be elected, but it will be by a party which has no common bond of union but his name: & [~~two words illegible~~] opposition to the administration. It will probably fall to pieces a short time after the Presidential election: - and then "the Devil take the hindmost". Our only present danger is that we have got strong too soon - & may act imprudently during the present Session. Colonel Drayton went a great length in debate on Monday last, without the least cause. To get up an excitement on the Slave question at present would be to play into the hands of our enemies in Pennsylvania. I shall prevent it if possible. I believe the best interests of the country require that Mr. Adams should not be re-elected; yet I think we may calculate upon stormy political times for a few years to come.

Please to present by best respects to all enquiring friends not forgetting Mr. Montgomery - & my most respectful compliments to Mrs. Reynolds & believe me to be your sincere friend.

James Buchanan

John Reynolds Esq

Dear Sir,

Washington 23 March 1832

I arrived here yesterday morning after a pleasant & speedy journey from Lancaster. "Richard" himself again!! I had no idea I should feel so much in leaving Lancaster. I am better satisfied with my mission the more I know of it.

I met Commodore Morris yesterday at dinner at the President's. He spoke in the very highest terms of William & said his wife had become so much interested in him, that she wanted to invite him to their house during the very cold weather & relieve him from duty but the Commodore would not consent. He says the Boxer will touch at the Coast of Africa - & the northern Coast of Brazil & meet the Peacock at Rio Janeiro. She will then sail for the Falklands. In the opinion of the Commodore it is the very cruise w<sup>ch</sup> the friends of W<sup>m</sup> ought to have desired. He will return a seaman.

I shall hope to hear from you in Philadelphia where I expect to arrive on Thursday next. Remember me to Mr. Reynolds Mr. Raymaker & any other friends. In great haste

John Reynolds Esq

Yours sincerely  
James Buchanan

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In great haste  
Yours sincerely  
James Buchanan

John Reynolds Esq

S. Petersburg <sup>25 July</sup>  
6 August 1832.

Dear Sir /

Yours of the 3<sup>d</sup> June arrived here on the 30<sup>th</sup> July. I have not yet received any Newspapers through the Department of State. With the exception of a few sent to me by friends, <sup>at New York</sup> in vessels sailing direct from that to this City, I have received none since my arrival. I have taken such means to correct this evil as I have no doubt will be effectual. The greatest treat which could now be offered me would be a file of the Lancaster Journal for the last four months.

I fear from your letter that Mr. Penrose has not been as attentive as I had expected to my business in Cumberland. He should have given you the earliest notice of the time at which the adms<sup>r</sup> intended to sell Mr. Penrose's property in that County not bound by my mortgage. Upon these sales the security of my debt depended, & care ought to have been taken to prevent a sacrifice of the property. - There was one small Judgment in Perry, before my mortgage; but Mr. W. D. D. had made an arrangement with the owner <sup>of the Perry property</sup> to prevent him from interfering with my mortgage. Without this if the Perry property has been sold, I might lose the amount of this first Judgment. I left a list of the Judgments in Cumberland either with you or Mr. Penrose, with remarks as to which of them had been paid.

If with the help of the interest & \$1000 of the principal of this debt, I could make the remainder absolutely secure I would be satisfied. I confer full power on the Doctor & yourself to do with it as if it were your own. I hope you may be able to secure the whole of it. I was fully under the impression I could have done so when I left the Country.

I think it will be in my power to send you \$2000 or possibly \$2500

before the first of April next to ~~pay~~ <sup>pay</sup> ~~at~~ <sup>at</sup> ~~in~~ <sup>in</sup> paying for the house, I will of course transmit it by a Bill of Exchange. If I should be able to do this, & Messrs Reigart & Magnaha will reduce their debt to \$3000 as I suggested in my last, you will have but little difficulty in making the payment.

The Summer here still continues cold & wet. Such a season has not been experienced by the oldest inhabitants. It has however been healthy, & whilst other portions of Europe are suffering with the cholera we have been exempted from this dreadful scourge. I fear that ere this, it has reached our happy country.

No American of good feelings can visit <sup>any part of</sup> Europe without having his attachment strengthened for home. Our Country & its institutions are without any thing like a parallel on the face of the earth. Would that we were justly sensible of our own happiness & the blessings we enjoy over all other nations! The situation of a foreign Minister from our Country, although it may be an object of ambition to many, certainly cannot promote the happiness of the successful candidate. I would <sup>much rather</sup> for my own part occupy a seat in the Senate or in the House. I say this not from despondency, for that would be without reason; but simply from the circumstance that a man devoted to free principles cannot be happy in the midst of Slavery.

So far as it regards my own person I shall ~~not~~ <sup>not</sup> dress so as not to compromise the Republican simplicity of my Country. For my equipage I have in a manner no control. I must submit to the established custom or forfeit many of the most essential privileges of a foreign minister. If I were to drive through the streets of Lancaster in the same style I do here, I should soon have a mob of men women & children in my train. I must drive four horses; otherwise I could not go to Court. My driver like the rest is a Puffian with a long



flowing black beard, dressed in the peculiar costume of his Country. There is a postilion on the leader; but what is the most ridiculous of all is the Chasseur who stands behind. He is decked out in his uniform more grand than that of our Militia Generals with a sword by his side & a large chapeau on his head surmounted by a plume of feathers. It is this dress which constitutes the peculiar badge of a foreign minister. It is by this they are known & ~~no~~ other persons have no right to array their servants in similar style. The soldiers at their stations present arms to the carriage, on the street they take off their hats to it, & it is every where received with so much deference, that I feel ashamed of myself whenever I pass through the City. It is ridiculous flummery. How Harry would be pleased to ride in this style! And how I should be delighted to have him with me for a week to give me the news! I expected he would have written me ere this; but except from yourself I have not received a line from Lancaster.

What a dunce I was not to have learned the German language! would have been almost as useful to me here as the French. I now understand the latter tolerably well; but it will be long before I shall speak it fluently.

When you write, do not say any thing which would be offensive to the Government. They are not very delicate about opening letters here. You had better perhaps give this caution to <sup>write freely upon all other subjects</sup> my other friends; we can send out what we please by American Captains, but every thing which comes in must pass through the Post Office.

I have every reason to be pleased with the conduct of Count Nesselrode towards me & to think that I am quite acceptable <sup>to this Govt</sup> as a minister. I still have good reason to hope I shall be successful. If Heaven should crown my efforts with success, it will be against difficulties of a formidable character.

Remember me to all my friends, I have not space left to enumerate them. They live in my heart & my affections; & the happiest day of my life will be that on which, with the blessing of Providence I shall meet them all again. Ever your friend James Buchanan

St. Petersburg 25 July 6 August 1832

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Remember me to all my friends. I have not space left to enumerate them. They live in my heart & my affections; & the happiest day of my life will be that on which, with the blessing of Providence I shall meet them all again.

Ever your friend  
James Buchanan

John Reynolds, Esq.

Dear Sir /

S. Petersburg 20 December 1832. N.S.

Although literally fagged out, having been up till after 2.0' clock for several nights I must snatch time before the departure of Mr. Clay to inform you & my other friends in Lancaster that I am well. Thank God, I concluded the Treaty <sup>of Commerce</sup> on Tuesday last with Count Nejschode which our Government have been anxious to obtain for the last twenty years. The difficulties which I had to encounter were very great & at one time I had lost all hope; but that good Providence which has always throughout my life made the sun shine to succeed the cloud has crowned my efforts <sup>with success</sup>. There were some incidents in the course of the negotiation of a very extraordinary nature which however ought not & will not be published for the present. I need not say to you that in accomplishing this purpose so long desired by our Government neither the dignity nor the honor of our Country was in the slightest degree sacrificed in my person. Russia has no such trials with any other commercial nation. — I am gradually I think becoming a favorite among this extraordinary people; though I am too much of a Republican even to be pleased with a residence in this Country. At the late fêtes at Court which I was obliged to attend very much against my own feelings on account of the melancholy death of my brother I was noticed in a special manner both by the Emperor & Empress. This was something in a Court, the members of which observe every word & every motion of His Majesty almost as if he were a Divinity. I ~~he~~ now have the joyful anticipation

which I hope may be realized of some more seeing the share of  
my native land in the course of the next winter. I need not  
caution you to keep the conclusion of the Treaty, except among a few  
of my most confidential friends; a profound secret until it shall be  
published at Washington & even then all that relates to the circumstances  
attending it.

It is so very long since I have heard from Lancaster that I am  
becoming quite uneasy. Had it not been for the letters from Mr. Reynolds  
& one from Miss Hubley of the date of the 28 Sep I should have been  
almost in despair. If you knew my anxiety you would take the  
trouble of writing me a few lines at least once a month. I confess  
I have had some hard thoughts of Sample, Norris & Montgomery on  
whom I depended for information. I have in consequence of their neglect  
opened a correspondence with other persons; but until this day you  
& Gardner Furness are the only <sup>gentlemen</sup> persons in the City or County of  
Lancaster from whom I have received letters. I am happy to say  
that my friends in other places have kept their promises better. Hated  
this day I do not know even who <sup>was our</sup> ~~was the~~ candidate for Congress  
in Lancaster County. We have had good news concerning the  
Presidential election from Pa & N. York. The communication between  
New York & this City is very regular & the time generally does not  
exceed thirty five days - sometimes several days sooner.

Has Mr. Allen<sup>r</sup> paid the Bond? Is Ramsays affair settled?  
I fear I shall not be able to send you any money, except the proceeds  
of the two drafts on Major Barry; but shall yet try. I am now  
pleased with your purchase.

I must dispatch Mr. Clay to day so that he may leave Liverpool by the  
packet of the 8<sup>th</sup> of January <sup>at the</sup> in time for the Treaty to be submitted to the Senate.

Give my kindest respects to Norris Montgomery & Sample & tell them I  
remember them more in sorrow ~~at~~ in friends hip than in anger. Remember me  
to Mr. Benson & family - the two Mr. Slays makers ~~and~~ all my Harry & all my other  
friends. Tell me something about Wellieson. Give my kindest  
respects to Mr. Reynolds - your mother & sister & believe me ever to  
be your friend & to have my heart fixed in Lancaster

John Reynolds Esq

James Buchanan

P.S. I shall give you W. Clay a letter to you & one to G. S. Mays Esq.  
He has promised me to spend a day or two in Lancaster.

and  
the present.  
and so  
the honor

St. Petersburg 20 December 1832. N. S.

Dear Sir/

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which I hope may be realised of once more seeing the shores of my native land in the course of the next winter. I need not caution you to keep the conclusion of the Treaty, except among a few of my most confidential friends, a profound secret until it shall be published at Washington & even then all that relates to the circumstances attending it.

It is so very long since I have heard from Lancaster that I am becoming quite uneasy. Had it not been for the letter from Mr. Slaymaker & one from Miss Hubley of the date of the 28 Sep I should have been almost in despair. If you knew my anxiety you would take the trouble of writing me a few lines at least once a month. I confess I have had some hard thoughts of Sample, Norris & Montgomery on whom I depended for information. I have in consequence of their neglect opened a correspondence with other persons; but until this day you & Gardner Furness are the only ~~persons~~ gentlemen in the City or County of Lancaster from whom I have received letters. I am happy to say that my friends in other places have kept their promises better. Until this day I do not know even who ~~was the~~ was our candidate for Congress in Lancaster County. We have had good news concerning the Presidential election from Pa & N. York. The communication between New York & this city is very regular & the time generally does not exceed thirty five days - sometimes several days sooner.

Has Mr. Kline Jr. paid the Bond? Is Ramseys affair settled? I fear I shall not be able to send you any money, except the proceeds of the two drafts on Mayor Barry; but shall yet try. I am now pleased with your purchase.

I must despatch Mr. Clay to day so that he may leave Liverpool by the packet of 8th of January & be in time for the Treaty to be submitted to the Senate.

Give my kindest respects to Norris Montgomery & Sample & tell them I remember them more in sorrow & in friendship than in anger. Remember me to Mr. Jenkins & family the two Mrs. Slaymakers & ~~all my~~ Harry & all my other friends. Tell me something about William.

Give my kindest respects to Mr. Reynolds your mother & sister & believe me ever to be your friend & to have my heart fixed in Lancaster

James Buchanan

John Reynolds Esq.-

[Page Break]

P. S. I shall give Mr. Clay a letter to you & one to G. L. Mayor Esq. He has promised me to spend a day or two in Lancaster.



S. Petersburg 3 July 1833.

My dear Sir,

I wrote to you on the 29 May last in answer to yours by Mr. Clay. On the 24 June I had the pleasure of receiving yours of the 26 April. — On Saturday last through the Hamburg Reported ~~via London~~ <sup>via London</sup> we had news from New York, of the death of the 1<sup>st</sup> of June!! Poor Randolph is dead at last. All his faults will now be forgotten, & his merits will be blazoned forth through out the United States.

The death of Washington Hopkins has made a strong impression upon me. How many of my friends & acquaintances shall I miss from the social circle after an absence of less than two short years! Poor Wager! I have fearful forebodings of his fate. God grant they may not be realised. Truly this is not our abiding place.

I need scarcely say that I approve entirely of the manner in which you & the Doctor have managed my private concerns.

It always affords me pleasure to hear of the health & prosperity of your son William. I trust he is destined to be an ornament to the Navy & a comfort to his family.

I returned from Moscow on the 24 ultimo after an absence of three weeks. It was truly an interesting excursion. Petersburg is a cosmopolitan city but at Moscow you see Russia. I shall not forestall myself by attempting to give you an account of my travels. I have taken notes;

but faith <sup>ill</sup> — not prevent them. Whilst at Moscow, I made a pil-  
-grimage to the Shrine of S. Serge at the distance of 40 Miles ~~from~~ going  
& returning I suppose we met ten thousand fellow pilgrims. They were chiefly  
of the fair sex & nearly all on foot. This Shrine is at the monastery of  
Troitze - a ~~now~~ place famous in Russian history. It was a convent, a  
palace & a fortification at the same time. There the family of the Czars  
have often found refuge. In passing round <sup>on</sup> the top of the walls with  
the archimandrite (which are about 1 Mile &  $\frac{1}{4}$  in circumference) he said  
in a tone of triumph & of national antipathy - that they never had been taken  
by the Poles. I have never seen a man who had so much Christian  
benevolence in his countenance & his flowing beard set off his appearance  
to advantage. On taking leave he presented me with a consecrated picture  
of S. Serge, & from him I submitted to the operation of being baptized  
first on the right cheek, then on the left - & finally plump on the mouth.  
It is the general custom among the Nations. I forgot to mention that  
the poor Catharine after seizing all the land & the peasants of this  
monastery for the use of the crown made a pilgrimage on foot from  
Moscow to the Shrine of S. Serge.

I do not yet know precisely when I shall be able to leave here  
but I trust & believe it will not be later than the 15<sup>th</sup> of August. In  
the mean time I hope you will not fail to write as Mr. Paill will  
send your letters to me wherever I may be.

The conspiracy which has been formed by a number of Poles  
to assassinate the Emperor has created us little uneasiness in this  
P.S. I intend to celebrate the 4<sup>th</sup> tomorrow by giving a dinner to all the respectable  
Americans now here.

St. Petersburg 3 July 1833.

My dear Sir/

I wrote to you on the 22 May last in answer to yours by Mr. Clay. On the 24 June I had the pleasure of receiving yours of the 26 April. - On Saturday last through the Hamburg Reporter ~~via London~~ we had news from New York via London up till the 1st of June!! Poor Randolph is dead at last. All his faults will now be forgotten, & his merits will be blazoned forth throughout the United States.

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I do not yet know precisely when I shall be able to leave here but I trust & believe it will not be later than the 10th of August. In the meantime I hope you will not fail to write as Mr. Vail will send your letters to me wherever I may be.

The conspiracy which has been formed by a number of Poles to assassinate the Emperor has created a little uneasiness in this Capital. Alarm has been excited not only ~~by~~ on account of the veneration in which he is held by his subjects; but by the apprehension which is felt in regard to his successor in power. The heir apparent is yet a minor. He possesses an amiable disposition, but not much talent nor firmness of character. The Grand Duke Michel who would be the regent is as much detested as his brother is respected. In case of a revolution here no foreigner would

be safe. Such is the lamentable condition of men under a despotism that the prosperity of 40.000.000 of people depend upon the life of a single man. Three of the conspirators have already been taken & every precaution is used. These Poles think they are playing the part of Scaevola. Their sufferings have driven them to desperation. It is said that many of the friends of the Emperor have urged him not to give the great fête of Peterkoff this year on account of the facilities it wd. afford to the conspirators. But he never shows the white feather. He says he will die when his time comes & if that in the day appointed he must submit to his fate. It will take place on the 1/13 of this month,

In regard to the Senate I confess I do not entertain very flattering hopes. The State administration will probably have sufficient power to elect M'Kean. If so, be it so. I am content. The question of Secession will be the touchstone of party for the next 20 years. It is in itself a harmless question, because when a State is ready to secede it will be ready to rebel. It will tend to destroy sectional parties which are always dangerous. It differs entirely from nullification; & is far from being so unreasonable.

Please to give my love to your family & the two Mrs. Slaymakers. Remember me to all my friends I have not room to enumerate them & believe to be ever yr friend

James Buchanan.

I do not think I shall want the house much before the 1st. of April; but do in all things as you please.

P. S. I intend to celebrate the 4th. tomorrow by giving a dinner to all respectable Americans now here.

[John Reynolds Esq]

Senate Chamber 22 February 1842

My dear Sir /

I welcomed the agreeable novelty which your letter presented. I receive oceans of letters from all mankind, except my personal friends in Lancaster. It ought to rejoice my heart that they are all so busy as not to find time to write.

A man as he grows old will, in spite of himself, remember the practices of his youth & often act upon them. No person but one accustomed in early life to hear good sound orthodox Puritanical sermons could have divided a letter into such appropriate heads as yours. In replying to you permit me to follow the same order. "And First." James M. Hopkins has not paid the interest due on the 1<sup>st</sup> December last. Mr. Lightree has paid me between 2 & 3 hundred dollars on account; and I shall need the balance much when I go to Lancaster about the last of March.

"Secondly." "The imperviousness of man" & especially of Iron masters, "has risen to such a height of nature" that I am not astonished at their ignorance of my former efforts in their favor. Had they trusted to me I think that the necessary revenue duties might have been so framed as to give them sufficient protection. These efforts are destroying themselves & exciting the jealousy of the Southern

Representatives & the Southern people. If you could in addition to  
all that has been done get the Legislature to instruct us to vote  
for "a protective tariff," this would be the coup-de-grace.

"Thirdly." - In regard to the Presidency; - I have heard much of  
the plot against me <sup>in Penn<sup>a</sup></sup> & it may have some existence. I do not  
distrust Governor Porter. Seth Salisbury is, I believe, the great  
contender of it. Col: Johnston has about as much chance of receiving  
the nomination <sup>of the Nat<sup>l</sup> Con;</sup> as I have of being elected Emperor of China. The  
real contest would seem to be between Van Buren & myself; & if the  
Democracy of Penn<sup>a</sup> would sustain me with an unbroken front I  
think my chances are fully equal if not superior to his. ~~Col: All~~  
Col: Johnston's efforts can only aid Van Buren; & he would as leave  
help the D-C. Should there be <sup>even</sup> the appearance of a serious  
division in Penn<sup>a</sup>, I shall make my bow & retire. The question  
would then be settled in 60 days; and under the flag of  
Van Buren & the Sub Treasury, I fear we should again be beaten.

"Fourthly." I admit that a sound paper currency would be a very  
good thing; but I have not yet found the power in the  
Constitution to enable Congress to furnish it. I shall diligently  
seek after it & ~~if~~ should I detect it lurking there, I shall drag  
it into day; because I feel sensible that we ought to do all  
we can to relieve the people in their present distress.

I know nothing in regard to the Cop of the Peacock except what you have seen in the papers. Wellam is safe & I suppose this knowledge must satisfy you for the present.

I am glad to learn that Lucinda has done so well & that there is every prospect of her doing better. You forgot to tell me the result of the arbitration which I am anxious to know.

I have no comfort for the holders of Indiana Bonds except the conviction which I feel that all the fairly contracted debts of the States will finally be paid if the States are able: & if not so much of them, say one half, as they can afford to pay. But I hope to see you in Lancaster & then we shall talk over all these matters.

Clay has actually resigned, his resignation not to take effect until the 31<sup>st</sup> March. This has been done to enable the Legislature of Kentucky to elect his successor before their adjournment.

Remember me kindly to Mr. Reynolds & the family & believe me ever to be sincerely your friend

John Reynolds

James Buchanan

Senate Chamber 22 February 1842

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