

New York No 36. East 21<sup>st</sup> St  
Jan 29<sup>th</sup> 1874

Gentlemen,

I beg to call your attention to a matter of common interest which, no doubt, on your part and on mine, has been the subject of much anxious thought. I refer to the biography of the late President Buchanan. The choice of me as the writer of his life was, as you are aware purely voluntary on his part, and founded on considerations frankly stated in his will. The trust was gratefully accepted by me and partially executed. In 1869 or 70, under the pressure of heavy pecuniary embarrassments, and from an impulse which you seemed freely to appreciate I renounced this trust and left you and the other parties in interest free to make any substitution you might think suitable. It was my wish and intention throughout to render to any successor who might be selected every assistance in my power. With this view, I put myself in communication with Professor Welling when he was selected, and who I sincerely hoped would execute the work. Four years have now elapsed, six since the Presidents death, and the debt due to justice, to public expectation, and to his memory has not been paid. It is no fault of yours in any sense, but the fact is as I have stated it, the lapse of time working the usual result in dimming the memory of the living and death of friends and contemporaries. To me, taking a full share of my responsibility on the matter, this has been and is a great sorrow. An anxious consideration of the whole subject, and consultation with my children who have succeeded to the pecuniary interest specifically bequeathed to their mother which I believe it is not in my power to divest, induce me to ask you to restore this part or duty to me, and to express to you my anxiety to resume it. My health is completely restored, my capacity for literary labor is unimpaired and I am confident if the proper facilities were afforded me, that, within a reasonable time, this great work might be completed. I can devote my whole mind to it. I beg you to give this matter your best and most candid consideration and, at your earliest convenience, to favor me with your decision. Having heard that different views were held by Mr [sic] Buchanan's family representative of their rights in this matter and very resolute not to intrude my claims against the opposition of any one, I have thought it best to send copies of this letter to Mrs [sic] Johnston and Mr [sic] J B Henry, so that they may have the opportunity without any suggestions on your part to express their views, adverse or otherwise. I hope I do no wrong in this.

I am truly and Respt

Yours\_

William B Reed

To the  
Rv. E. Y. Buchanan &  
H. B. Swarr  
Executors

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