

# LETTERS OF JAMES BUCHANAN

By WILLIAM FREDERIC WORNER

(Continued from page 153.)

TO EMANUEL C. REIGART, ESQUIRE.<sup>1</sup>

In the Marietta Pioneer of Friday, August 15th, 1828, appeared an article with the following imposing caption:

"Fathers! Husbands! Brothers! — read — pause — reflect — and then vote for James Buchanan, if you can!"

The Lancaster Journal of Friday, August 22nd, 1828, in answer to the attack on our congressman by the Marietta paper, contained the following:

"This article charged Mr. Buchanan with having asserted, 'within the hearing of two or more respectable witnesses, that Mrs. Adams, the wife of our chief magistrate, *was born out of wedlock!* a term synonymous with bastard.' The commentary which is then given in the Marietta Pioneer upon this text, is too vile and horrible even to mention, and could proceed from no other than a heart as wicked, depraved and diabolical as Satan himself could ever have *hoped* to find among the sons of the fallen Adam. But it is not our object at present to comment upon the character of those who have been guilty of this outrage upon society for, we regret to say, that during the present political contest, there have been too many examples on the side of the coalition, of a total disregard of truth or a decent respect for the opinions of society, in many of the charges which have been made in their prints . . ."

The Lancaster Journal also published sworn statements from M. Brooke Buckley, of Laurel Works, and John Longenecker and James Humes, of Lancaster, who supported the local newspaper and our representative in the Congress of the United States against the malicious lies in the Marietta Pioneer.

Mr. Buchanan had good grounds, no doubt, for accusing Emanuel C. Reigart, of Lancaster, for furnishing the editor of the Marietta Pioneer with the information upon which the dastardly attack was based. Upon his return to Lancaster, Mr. Buchanan lost no time in dispatching the following severe rebuke to Mr. Reigart:

"Lancaster, August 19th, 1828.

"Sir:

"The note which you addressed to me on the 7th inst., and the honorable sentiments which it contains, are the only reasons why I address you on the present occasion.

"Upon my return from Franklin county last night, the Marietta Pioneer was placed in my hands, which contains an attack upon me that I shall not characterise by any epithet. It relates to Mrs. Adams, a lady for whom I have ever felt the highest respect, and whom I defended publicly, last winter, upon the floor of the House of Representatives; a lady of whom I spoke

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<sup>1</sup> Lancaster Journal, Friday, August 22nd, 1828.

repeatedly at the Yellow Springs, in the highest terms.

"The fact is not to be disguised that suspicion has fallen upon you and another gentleman; and you are believed by some, to be the person who furnished the information upon which the article in the Marietta Pioneer is predicated. There were other gentlemen present who have a distinct recollection of the whole conversation, out of a misrepresentation of which, this article must have arisen. I wish you, therefore, to state to me, whether I used any language upon the occasion, disrespectful to Mrs. Adams; and whether I did not condemn the introduction into the newspapers, of the allegation, whether true or false, that she was born out of lawful wedlock. I wish you to state the whole truth.

"Honorable men have a common interest, with which politics should never interfere, in preventing the misrepresentation of casual private conversations from being introduced into the newspapers.

"From your obedient servant,

"JAMES BUCHANAN."

"To Emanuel C. Reigart, Esq."

FROM EMANUEL C. REIGART, ESQUIRE.<sup>2</sup>

"Lancaster, August 19th, 1828.

"Sir:

"Your note of this day has been handed to me. I am not astonished that the circulation of the remark which fell from you at the Yellow Springs, relative to Mrs. Adams, and which has lately become the subject of newspaper discussion, should be attributed to me. Nothing that may happen in the political world can astonish me, since the late shameless reiterated attacks which John Reynolds has thought proper to make on me, through the medium of the Lancaster Journal.

"Without reference to what may be the recollections of the other gentlemen, who were present at the time the remark was made, and without being concerned over who may suspect me of having reported the conversation, I will endeavor to state my recollection of the matter, which, as nearly as I can recollect, is as follows: Henry G. Long and myself were, during the evening on which the remark was made, sitting on the portico at the house of Col. Bones, at the distance of fifteen or twenty feet from the southeastern angle; you were very near, or at the angle. Some persons were on the eastern portico; who they were I do not know. There was some conversation in relation to the charge, *said to have been made by the administration presses*, that General Jackson's mother had been married to a mulatto man; you then said (as I understood), in answer to that charge: 'That Mrs. Adams was born out of wedlock,' or 'that it was said that Mrs. Adams was born out of wedlock;' whether the former or the latter expression was used, I cannot now be positive, and could only give my impressions. It is but justice, however, to state, that your remark was altogether in reference to the *alleged charge*

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<sup>2</sup> Lancaster Journal, Friday, August 22nd, 1828.

against Mrs. Jackson; it was free from any apparent bitterness or malice, and did not appear to be designed to injure Mrs. Adams, judging from the tone of your voice and your manner at the time.

"Immediately after you had made the remark, I left the portico and went into the house; any other remark that you may have made concerning Mrs. Adams, I did not hear; in fact, I did not charge my memory with the remark you had made, and did not suppose that it would elicit any newspaper discussion. On the following Monday, I left the Springs for Philadelphia, and on my return a few days afterwards, I heard your remarks with respect to Mrs. Adams, spoken of at Lancaster.

"I perceive by your note that I am suspected of having furnished the information upon which the article in the Marietta Pioneer is predicated. Those who choose to suspect me, may; I shall not use any means to remove their suspicions; they wish me to prove a negative, and I decline, and will leave it to time to fix or remove their suspicions.<sup>3</sup>

"I am very respectfully,

"E. C. REIGART."

"To Hon. James Buchanan."

TO ZACHARIAH POULSON,  
EDITOR, THE AMERICAN DAILY ADVERTISER.<sup>4</sup>

"Washington, March 6th, 1830.

"To the Editor of the American Daily Advertiser:

"Sir:

"I am induced to address you, from having this moment observed a communication in relation to myself in your paper of the 4th instant, which does me great injustice. Your character is a sufficient pledge that you would never, intentionally, suffer your paper to become the means of doing injury to any man.

"On Wednesday the 26th ultimo, I made some remarks in favor of printing an extra number of the report of the committee on Indian Affairs, which was on that day presented to the House by Mr. Bell, its chairman. These remarks were reported in the Telegraph: and sketches of them were given in the Journal and Intelligencer. In the latter paper the sketch was so incorrect (an unusual occurrence) that I complained of it immediately to one of the editors, though I did not at the time think it a matter of sufficient importance to ask for a correction. From this incorrect sketch, the editor of the National Gazette selected *the middle* of a single sentence, omitting the beginning and the end, and made it a text for a commentary not very complimentary to myself. This article may probably have led the author of the communication in your paper into error.

"That I may be correctly represented before the public in Philadelphia,

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<sup>3</sup> It is pleasant to note the name of Mr. Reigart affixed to an invitation to a complimentary dinner tendered to Mr. Buchanan in 1848.

<sup>4</sup> Lancaster Journal, Friday, March 12th, 1830.

whose good opinion I am anxious to deserve, I would thank you to publish the remarks *which I did make*, on the subject. For that purpose I enclose you the Telegraph of the 26th ultimo.

"I never did say, nor did I ever think, that all the individuals, or a majority, or even any considerable portion of them, who have memorialized Congress on the subject of Indian Affairs, were 'enthusiasts;' and to those persons, whom I did thus denominate, I attributed pure motives even in stronger terms than have been attributed to me in the Telegraph.

"By publishing this letter, and my remarks, you will do justice to

"Yours, respectfully,

"JAMES BUCHANAN."

"To Zachariah Poulson, Esq."

TO THE ELECTORS OF THE FOURTH CONGRESSIONAL  
DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA.<sup>5</sup>

"Washington, April 23rd, 1830.

"To the Electors of the Fourth Congressional District of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Composed of the Counties of Delaware, Chester and Lancaster:

"Having, at a public meeting in Lancaster, a short time after my last election, declared my intention not to be a candidate for Congress at the next election, I now deem it proper, in this manner, to make that intention known throughout the district. This is done to prevent misapprehension, and to give you time to select a suitable person as my successor.

"It is well known to my friends, that it was not my desire to have served longer than three terms in Congress; but circumstances rendered it proper, in the opinion of those in whose judgment I confided, that I should be a candidate for a fourth, and a fifth election. At the close of the present Congress, I shall have been longer, in continued succession, a member, than any representative from Pennsylvania, with whom I have ever served. This I attribute altogether to your partial indulgence; and it would ill become me longer to trespass on your kindness.

"I have taken a decided part in most of the important measures before Congress, since I became your representative; yet I am not aware that, by you, my legislative conduct has ever been the subject of censure; and it has been my most valued reward to know, that it has not unfrequently met your cordial approbation. When you approved, you warmly commended; and when you differed from me in opinion, you never questioned the integrity of my motives.

"So long as memory endures, I shall entertain a most grateful sense of the numerous obligations which I owe to constituents, who have so kindly, generously and affectionately supported me, in the many political conflicts in which it was my lot to have been involved. In thus taking my leave of you,

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<sup>5</sup> Lancaster Journal, Friday, May 7th, 1830.

after so long a period of service, I cannot omit the occasion of offering up my most ardent prayers for your health, happiness and prosperity.

"Yours truly,

"JAMES BUCHANAN."

TO WILLIAM BUEHLER, INNKEEPER, HARRISBURG.<sup>6</sup>

The Rev. Thomas H. Robinson, who in 1891 was a professor in the Western Theological Seminary, Allegheny City, Pa., is a son-in-law of the late William Buehler, who kept a tavern in Harrisburg, Pa. Mr. Buehler was a son-in-law of George Wolf, governor of Pennsylvania, from December, 1829, to December, 1835. Through his connection with the Buehler family, Mr. Robinson has come into possession of a number of the valuable public and private papers of Governor Wolf. In the collection, is a letter from James Buchanan to William Buehler. It is interesting in that it discloses the careful habits of Mr. Buchanan early in life.

The letter is as follows:

"Lancaster, August 18th, 1830.

"Dear Sir:

"I believe I left a night shirt in the room which I occupied at your house. If so, please to send it to me by the stage or any other mode of conveyance which may offer.

"Yours truly,

"JAMES BUCHANAN."

"To Mr. Buehler, Innkeeper, Harrisburg."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE LANCASTER JOURNAL.<sup>7</sup>

"Washington City, February 5th, 1835.

"To the Editor of the Lancaster Journal:

"Sir:

"I have observed, with profound gratitude, that my Democratic fellow-citizens of the county of Lancaster have brought my name before the public for the office of Vice-President. Permit me, through your paper, to express to them my warmest acknowledgments of this new testimony of their regard.

"Under existing circumstances, I believe I should best promote the harmony and success of the Democratic party throughout the Union, by declining to become a candidate for this distinguished honor. My determination thus to act has been freely communicated to all my friends who have consulted me on the subject; and I am glad that the nomination in Lancaster county affords me an opportunity of making that determination public.

"Yours, very respectfully,

"JAMES BUCHANAN."

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<sup>6</sup> The Lancaster Intelligencer, Tuesday, July 21st, 1891.

<sup>7</sup> Lancaster Journal, Friday, February 13th, 1835.

REPLY TO INVITATION TO A PUBLIC DINNER IN HONOR  
OF EDWARD LIVINGSTON.<sup>8</sup>

"Lancaster, July 17th, 1835.

"Gentlemen:

"It would afford me the highest gratification to be able to unite with my Democratic fellow-citizens of the city and county of Philadelphia, in doing honor to a man who has done so much honor to his country as Edward Livingston.<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, however, my engagements prevent me from accepting your kind invitation.

"Every American who visits the continent of Europe has cause to feel proud of the character of his country. The simple name of an American citizen is there a passport to higher favor, among the wise and the good, than all the vain titles with which the privileged classes of other countries are bedecked. We have acquired much of our present high standing among the nations of the earth, by battling bravely and successfully in a righteous cause, against the gigantic and united power of England. The world is now convinced that the American Eagle can neither be injured nor insulted with impunity. Such a conviction, whilst it elevates the character of our country, is our very best security against foreign war. But this exalted station can only be maintained by the strictest public faith and justice towards all nations, and by a prompt manifestation of our ability and will, to compel other nations to make these great principles the rule of their conduct towards ourselves.

"Let us once barter our national honor for money—let us once yield an apology to a foreign nation for the sake of obtaining dollars and cents—and not sooner would the touch of guilt mar the purity of the female character, than would we sink to the lowest level in the scale of nations. Those who ask, and those who would present an apology, under such circumstances, are equally unmindful of what they owe their country. Disguise it as we may, the brave and gallant nation which withholds from us the payment of a just debt, in order to extort an apology for a supposed national insult, has tarnished her fair fame, and has exposed herself to the ridicule of the world. What would be thought of the chivalry of an individual, who, upon being insulted by his creditor, instead of instantly cancelling the debt, and then demanding satisfaction, would content himself by gravely informing the insulter, that he should not receive the money justly due to him, until he would make an apology. Such is now the false position in which France is placed before the world. That she may speedily extricate herself from it by render-

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<sup>8</sup> Lancaster Journal, Friday, July 24th, 1835.

<sup>9</sup> Edward Livingston, a prominent jurist and statesman, was graduated at Princeton College in 1781. In 1775, he became a member of the House of Representatives; and in 1829 was a United States senator. In 1831 he was appointed secretary of state. In 1833, he went to France as minister plenipotentiary, and was successful in securing payment of the indemnity on account of French spoliations. He died in 1836.

ing us justice, must be the ardent wish of every American who remembers her brilliant career and her services in the cause of our Independence.

"But it is impossible, that under any circumstances, the Government of the United States, can ever make an apology to a foreign nation, for anything contained in a message of the President to Congress. Any attempt to compel it is a direct attack upon our independent and free action as a nation: and if submitted to, would establish a precedent under which foreign nations might interfere between the different branches of our own government. It would open the door wide for foreign influence, which has ever been the bane of republics. The Senate and House of Representatives would thus be converted into appellate tribunals to try a co-ordinate branch of the government, upon the accusation of a foreign nation. We never can submit that our Executive shall be responsible for his communications to Congress, to any power except that of God and his country. The moment we tolerate any other principle we forfeit our national independence.

"But this question has been placed at rest forever by the unanswerable argument of Mr. Livingston. All men of all parties, within my knowledge, heartily unite in this opinion. It is gratifying to observe that upon this question, involving as it does the honor of the country, there are no party distinctions. We are all Americans.

"It is fortunate that the peculiar circumstances in which our minister was placed enabled him, without departing from the position which he had rendered impregnable, to make a full and triumphant explanation of the conduct of the President. This explanation, sanctioned as it has been by him, will be and ought to be perfectly satisfactory to France. Should we be mistaken in this anticipation, the Nation will be up as one man, and say, 'perish the sum, if it were a thousand millions, rather than submit to self-degradation!'

"In conclusion, will you please present to the company, in my name, the following statement:

"'National, like individual character, can only be preserved by national faith, and when the occasion demands it by national firmness.'

"Yours very respectfully,

"JAMES BUCHANAN."

*(To be continued)*