

Letter of James Virgul Barnes, Cape Girardeau, Missouri, to R. D. Watson, c/o Demill and Company, 178½ Water Street, New York, dated March 2, [1865]

The following document is a scanned image in PDF format of an original letter from James Virgul Barnes to R. D. Watson [Robert D. Watson], dated March 2, 1865. Following the digitized version of the letter, a transcript with explanatory notes has been provided. Every effort has been made to make it faithful to the original. However, where one reader sees a hyphen, another may see a period. In any case, decisions made with respect to representing punctuation appear to have little or no bearing on the meaning intended by the letter writer.

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David Vancil
Librarian & Department Head
March 23, 2004

W. C. E. Adams

By

W. C. E. Adams

N. H. Adams



March 2, -

Friend Robert--

I was much dismayed by what I found on my return from Canada. You were gone but four days when I arrived but a great amount had transpired in the interim. The Provost Marshall has seized much of our pork supply and has placed the rest beyond our power to deliver it in compliance with our contracts. The day after your departure from New York 1300 barrels were seized at Gibraltar and another 900 barrels at Schuylers Landing. The next day here the same repeated at Memphis, Owensboro, Louisville and Evansville. We are left with less than enough to fill our needs essential to our contracts here from East. Not only is the financial loss of the pork acute but it places us in arrears on our contracts with the Govt. I cannot but believe that this is planned by the Govt. for the express purpose of causing us to default and thereby lose

an advantage quoted earlier. - It is the
same as second elsewhere.

Our funds in Liverpool are much upset by just
the sort of thing on the part of the Greek-Soviet
Administration and there is much speculation as to
the effect it will have on the Crown's policy. It
is certain that the loss of £ 250 Million will
not be taken lightly. It is now clear that
Gruick allowed his funds to make agreements
which would amount to giving the election
and that he is now repudiating those agreements
so that he can again "become his own man". This
is the thought in Liverpool and they say it
cannot be done.

as to what we are to do --- ? Whatever
must be done at once - before the first of May -
done it will be to us avail.

1. The C.S.A. is dead and cannot help us.
2. The Greek make big noise but they fight
only in Athens -
3. We have been betrayed by Gruick and Second
I do have and friends in England.
4. We can expect only limited help from
England but they will secure our credits.
5. Whatever is done must be done by us with
directly or indirectly -

I had a long talk with J.W. as I returned through
Bellahis and he was greatly annoyed at his being
pleaded under your friend Capt. D. He stated that the

please see his god that he should be allowed to
bring it out. I explain that the situation had
changed and that it was no longer a question of
what he would do but rather of what he was
able to do - He is much too melodramatic and to
him the only thing is "the same" both on the
stage and off.

It is essential that the President and Secretary
not be damned but if they could be depended
for a fortnight the consequence, we are assured,
could and would act in the manner of the
operative. We are further assured that our contracts
would be recognized in toto.

I do not - I am sure - need to point out that
all we have needs with decisive action - the
time for caution in the extreme is long passed.
The sum in hand is worth more than 2 million
dollars and it is at present held by the U.S.
Govt and we certainly did not accumulate it to
sell to the U.S. at Army prices.

I see little chance that we can fill our contracts
in N.C. by June first but Stricker has assured me
that he could have 5,000,000 pounds of pork
at Wilmington or Charleston by July first for transaction.
Contact S. and have him get in connexion with
W. H. Lamon and see if the change can be made.
Be positive and prompt - all else is useless.

Resistance to Grants is Obstacle to God - Verquid

Transcription of letter:

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March 2, -

Friend Robert-

I was much dismayed by what I found on return from Canada. You were gone but four days when I arrived but a great amount had transpired in the interim. The Provost Marshall had seized much of our pork supply and has place the rest beyond our power to deliver it in compliance with our contracts. The day after our departure for New York, 1300 barrels were seized at Gargardeau and another 800 barrels at Schutes Landing. The next day saw the same repeated at Memphis, Owensboro, Louisville, and Brownsville. We are left with less than enough to fill our needs essential to our contracts due June First. Not only is the financial loss of the pork acute but it places us in arrears on our contracts with the Govt. I cannot but believe that this is planned by the Govt. for the express purpose of causing us to default and thereby lose

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our advantage granted earlier. It is the same as occurred elsewhere.

Our friends in Liverpool are much upset by just this sort of thing on the part of the Lincoln-Seward administration and there is much speculation as to the effect it will have on the Crown's policy. It is certain that the loss of X 250 Million £ will not be taken lightly. It is now clear that Lincoln allowed his friends to make agreements which would assure him of winning the election and that he is now repudiating those agreements so that he can "become his own man." This is the thought in Liverpool and they say that it cannot be done.

As to what they are to do - - ? Whatever must be done at once - before the First of May - else it will be to no avail.

1. The C.S.A. is dead and cannot help us.
2. The Irish¹ make big noises but they fight only in saloons.
3. We have been betrayed by Lincoln and Seward. So has Chase² and friends in England.
4. We can expect only limited help from England but they will secure our credits.

5. Whatever is done must be done by us either directly or indirectly.

I had a long talk with J. W.³ as I returned through Belleville and he was greatly annoyed at his being placed under your friend, Capt. B.⁴ He stated that the

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plan was his and that he should be allowed to carry it out. I explained that the situation had changed and that it was no longer a question of what he would do but rather what he was able to do. He is much too melodramatic and to him the only thing is “the scene,” both on the stage and off.

It is essential that the President and Secretary not be harmed but if they could be deposed for a fortnight the congress, we are assured, could and would act in the manner of the executive. We are further assured that our contracts would be recognized in toto.

I do not - I am sure - need to point out that all we have rests on decisive action - the time for caution in the extreme is long past. The meat we hold is worth more than 2 Million dollars and it is at present held by the U.S. Govt. and we certainly did not accumulate it to sell to the U.S. at Army prices.

I see little chance that we can fill our contracts in N.O. by June First but Stringer⁵ has assured that he could have 5,000,000. pounds of pork at Wilmington or Charleston by July First. Contact S.⁶ and have him get in connexion with W. H. Lamon⁷ and see if the changes can be made.

Be positive and prompt - all else is useless.

Resistance to Tyrants is Obedience to God -

Virgul

[End of letter]

Explanatory Notes

¹ Fenian Movement plots were rumored against Lincoln and other international leaders.

² “Chase” refers to Salmon Chase, former Secretary of the Treasury.

³ “J. W.” refers to John Wilkes [Booth].

⁴ “Captain B” indicates Captain James William Boyd.

⁵ “Stringer” has been identified as Edward P. Stringer, British blockade-running fleet owner with powerful British parliamentary connections.

⁶ “S” refers to [John] Surratt.

⁷ W. H. Lamon was Lincoln’s pre-war law partner, an active cotton lobbyist.