

American

BY JOHN B. BRATTON.

VOL. 40.

CARLISLE, PA., THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 1853.

AT \$3.00 PER ANNUM.

NO. 23.

Official Correspondence.

Letter from Secretary Guthrie to Collector Bronson.

WASHINGTON, Oct. 8, 1853.

To the Editor of the Union.

It seems the public have obtained through the press, an imperfect view of the contents of a letter from Secretary Guthrie to the collector of the customs at New York; and as the subject is a public one, I place in your hands a copy of the letter, which you are at liberty to make public.

JAMES GUTHRIE.

WASHINGTON, Oct. 3, 1853.

Dear Sir:—Since the conversation we had upon the subject of the unfortunate division in the Democratic party in New York, I feel more and more convinced that the present disorganization cannot fail to endanger the success of the principles of the party there and to prove injurious elsewhere. But the separation is effected. A conviction has been forced upon my mind, that by Democrats pledged to each other upon a common platform of principles, the division could and ought to have been prevented.

You are aware that the principles of the Baltimore convention, and the policy intimated in the inaugural address, the President and his constitutional advisers stand pledged to, before the world. They have been, and are, united as one man upon these principles and that policy, and had reason to believe that the people who consented to accept office under the administration stood pledged to the same principles and policy.

As the President understands the principles avowed as the platform of the party at Baltimore, all Democrats who joined in upholding and carrying out the same, should be recognized as worthy of the confidence of the party, and consequently eligible to official station.

That all could not obtain office was manifest, and that the distribution could not be exactly equal amongst the different sections of the party, was equally certain. The distribution, however, should be so made as to give just cause of complaint to no one section, and it is believed that this intention has been carried out, not only by the President himself, but by most of his appointees, in respect to the offices under his administration. It has very generally made from that portion of the party to which you adhere. This you thought best calculated to secure union and harmony.

That desirable object has failed to be obtained, and the other portion of the party, who have not been fully recognized, you and, as things now stand, may not do justice to your motives. I call your attention to this subject, and to the fact that the President and his cabinet, with entire unanimity, recognize that portion of the party as Democrats distinctly avowing and firmly maintaining the principles of the Baltimore platform, and entitled to be recognized by appointment to official stations in your department. Allow me to express the expectation that you will so recognize them in the only way that will carry conviction with it.

I have heretofore deemed it necessary to make any particular inquiry as to the section of the Democratic party to which persons nominated for positions in the custom house at New York had long prior to the reunion of the party in 1849—which reunion was supposed to have been thoroughly cemented in the minds of the Baltimore platform of 1853. But as the present excited state of feeling among political friends who acted together in 1853, and who now stand unequivocally upon the same platform of principles in New York, is suggestive of a discrimination of which the administration will not approve, I shall send you a copy of this letter to the Naval Officer and Surveyor of the Port, in order that there may be no misapprehension as to the policy which the President will require to be pursued.

I am, very respectfully,

JAMES GUTHRIE.

G. C. BRONSON, Esq., Collector, New York.

Copies of the above letter were sent to the Naval Officer and Surveyor, with the following note:

WASHINGTON, Oct. 3, 1853.

Dear Sir:—I enclose herewith a copy of a letter this day addressed to the Hon. G. C. Bronson. It will explain itself, and show you what the President expects in relation to the distribution of patronage in the respective offices of the New York custom house, to which you will conform your action in any future nominations you may have occasion to make.

I am, very respectfully,

JAMES GUTHRIE.

Ms. Collector Bronson to Mr. Secretary Guthrie.

New York, Oct. 17, 1853.

Sir:—The pressure of official business and confinement to a sick room have prevented an earlier answer to your letter of the 9th instant. You first state, in substance, that I have been holding the like relation to each other. He had a right to expect that his confidence in me would not be withdrawn. I have never complained that the President has not discharged his part of the obligation, and am not desirous of having omitted to discharge my own.

You tell me that the President and his constitutional advisers stand pledged before the world to the principles and policy laid down in the Baltimore platform and the inaugural address, and had reason to believe that all gentlemen who consented to accept office under the administration stood pledged to the same principles and policy. I agree to that; and, though it is but an implied pledge, I admit its full force. But it proves nothing to the present purpose, for there is not a word either in the Baltimore platform or the inaugural address about distributing offices among different sections of the party. If the President or his appointees are pledged to any such distribution you must look to some other document which I have never seen.

It may be inferred from the acts of the President, that he regards as eligible to office all Democrats who cordially united on the Baltimore platform in 1853, and are sincerely attached to the principles of the party, although at some former period they may have been out of the way. That is a proper rule. It is the one on which I have acted in making appointments to office—not because I was under any pledge to do so, but because I thought the rule just in itself. But your letter proceeds upon the ground that I should go beyond the inquiry whether applicants for office are good Democrats now, and ascertain to what section they formerly belonged, and then make such a distribution of offices between the different sections that no one of them will have just cause of complaint. It is not only impossible to administer such a rule as to distribute offices, but the consequence of adopting it must be that we shall never have one Democratic party, united upon a broad basis of principle, but a mere combination of different sections, held together by no better bond than the love of office, and ready to fall to pieces the moment one section thinks itself aggrieved in the distribution.

Notwithstanding what has been said, I think it would be found, on a proper scrutiny, that the section which has so loudly and bitterly complained of injustice has received its full share of the offices which I have bestowed. It is undoubtedly true that more appointments have been made from one section of the party than from the other, and a single reason will be sufficient to show why it was proper to pursue that course. Most of the Custom House appointments for this port have always been made from the counties of New York and Kings, in which are three large cities which form a part of the port. In 1848 the Democratic and Free Soil votes in those counties bore the relation of more than four for the former to one for the latter. From the Free Soil vote should be deducted the Whig Abolition vote, which went in the same direction. After making the proper allowance on that account, I think it safe to conclude that more than one out of seven of the Democrats in those counties voted the Free Soil ticket in 1848. In this view of the matter, I think it will be found that the Free Soil section is far from having just cause for complaint. I have acted in this liberal manner, not because I was under any pledge, but because I wished to do what I reasonably could, to promote the harmony and continued ascendancy of the party.

It is possible that I am mistaken in supposing that the Free Soil section has got its full share of the places; for, in distributing the little offices in my gift, which have for the most part gone among the rank and file of the party, I have neither had the time nor the inclination to do much by way of investigating the antecedents of men who were nominated by all right means.

In reference to your remark upon the recent rupture of the party at Syracuse, that "the division could and ought to have been prevented," it is enough for me to say that I only had no agency in bringing about that division, but I tried to prevent it. My counsel was not only given in favor of the united action of the Convention, but I sincerely hoped that harmony would prevail. If any government officers are chargeable with what took place at Syracuse, the burden must rest on those who were there—of whom three were from this city—and not upon the Collector, who was at home attending to the duties of his office.

I do not state these things by way of apology, for I have none to make; nor by way of boasting, for I have none to show.

In speaking of the union of the party in 1849, which was supposed to have been thoroughly cemented in the great and triumphant contest in 1853." Although I ardently desired a re-union, if it could be effected upon principle, I never approved the mode in which the attempt was made to bring about that desirable end. I thought that the re-union was not to be effected by the Democratic standard in 1849, and thrown the State and National Governments into the hands of the Whigs, should, if convinced of their error, return again to our camp without exacting conditions, and should then be treated with the utmost respect and consideration by the Whigs. But a very different course was pursued; and the Free Soil leaders came back, so far as they came at all, under a league or treaty between them and a few leading Democrats, with no stronger bond of union than an agreement to divide the offices. The arrangement was based upon no principle. The Free Soil leaders were left at liberty to adopt the course which they pursued; and, instead of going against the National banner, they marched into the Democratic camp with the most ostentatious display, and became an independent element in the party. Indeed, your letter proceeds upon the ground that the party has all along been divided into sections; and consequently, that accounts must be balanced between them in the distribution of offices. All experience proves that such a coalition as was formed in 1849 can never be thoroughly cemented. Sooner or later it will fall to pieces. The cohesive power of patronage cannot long save that which has within itself the elements of dissolution. It is, therefore, any matter of astonishment that the "re-union" was dissolved at the late Syracuse Convention.

After the league of 1849 had been broken, and the two sections had again become separate parties in form as well as in substance, it became necessary for me, as a citizen of New York, to make my choice between the two tickets which had been nominated. My reasons for preferring one and rejecting the other are before the public; and no one has the right to impute to me any other motives than those which I have avowed. I rejected one ticket because the nomination had been effected by means which no honest man could approve, and because the nominees had been brought forward by men who had been hostile to what I deemed the best interests of the State in relation to the canal. I approved the other ticket because the nominees were right on the question of State policy, and because those who supported it were contending for the principles which restored the Democratic party to power, and placed Franklin Pierce at the head of the government." I presume there can be no objection at Washington to my maintaining now, as I have always done before, the principles on which the National Administration stands; and with questions of mere State policy, you must allow me to say the Administration has no rightful concern.

What consequences will follow the recent break in the party is more than I can tell; but I feel ready to repeat the sentiments of the Administration, that the party, and the Free Soil Democrats were not fighting under false colors, their ticket could not get votes enough to help the Whigs through their nominations. But we have not got a fair field. The Washington Union, while professing to speak the sentiments of the Administration, has thrown its weight on the side of the Free Soil ticket. It has undertaken to decide upon the regularity of our conventions, and to sit in judgment upon questions of mere State policy. It takes the side of those who have once proved faithless to the party, and put the Union in jeopardy, and de-

notices those who have all along supported the principles which restored the party to power. It is now a co-laborer with the Free Soil prints in this State, some of which it so lately read out of the Democratic party. Though that print is not itself of great importance, yet when it professes, without rebuke, to do these things as the organ of the Administration, much mischief may be done. It matters little what disclaimers there may be in private circles, so long as there is no public declaration that the paper speaks without authority. However, unfortunately the election may terminate, the responsibility will rest upon others, and not upon me.

Let me now notice the time, the manner and motive of your letter.

As to time. It was after the rupture and nomination of two tickets in Syracuse, and the two national meetings in this city, after the Collector had been denounced by the Free Soil leaders and press, and the President had been called upon to remove him; after hungry office seekers and bitter politicians had begun to hang to misrepresent and traduce the Collector, and to show signs of coming out against any kind against the Collector. You had approved of his nominations with a single exception, and in that case the office was abolished. Down to the receipt of your letter of the 3d inst., you had never intimated a collector's appointment, or of the manner in which they had been distributed.

As to the manner. You did not pursue the usual course, and issue a circular laying down a uniform rule for the Collector to follow, but confined your instructions to the port of New York alone. If the doctrine of the latter is a sound one, it is obviously proper that it should be applied in other places as well as here, and it should regulate the conduct of all classes of government officers having patronage to bestow. Marshals, Postmasters, District Attorneys and others should not act in the selection of their deputies, clerks, and assistants, as if they were independent of the Collector. You had approved of his nominations with a single exception, and in that case the office was abolished. Down to the receipt of your letter of the 3d inst., you had never intimated a collector's appointment, or of the manner in which they had been distributed.

As to the motive of this movement, let others judge. This, I believe, the first instance in which a member of the Cabinet has interfered with the discretion of a subordinate officer having patronage to bestow, and laid down a rule for his government in the selection of his deputies, clerks or other agents, and it certainly is the first instance in which a public officer has been instructed to go into an inquiry into the antecedents of men who were nominated by all right means.

As to some officers of the customs, the Collector has the right of nomination; and as the Secretary has the right of approval or rejection, and as to the other public matters, and the duties of the Collector alone. I shall not interfere with the exercise of your powers, and I trust you will render the like justice to me. If you or any other high officer of the Government, desire to apply to me on any matter, and I do not see that it would give me great pleasure to comply with the wish—but I respectfully deny that you have any right to issue instructions for the government of my conduct in making such appointments. Do not so seriously relate to the mere disposition of patronage, without regard to my responsibility for the acts of the persons appointed, I would gladly transfer the trust to another. I have no taste for such matters, and I do not wish to be troubled with them. I shall not interfere with the exercise of your powers, and I trust you will render the like justice to me. 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