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Letter to Frederick Seward

Henry B. Adams

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If printed, however, it must of course be done without the knowledge of my father, as that would commit him to it. As I do not wish, myself, to be known now as a writer for the press, I would prefer to have its origin kept secret.

Excuse my officiousness, I pray; and believe me

Very truly Yrs Henry Brooks Adams.

Thurlow Weed Esq.

MS: NRU

1. The enclosed letter, unfortunately lost, apparently referred to British-American discussions in 1861 on the Declaration of Paris; official publication of the diplomatic documents of that year was imminent. HA returned to the subject in "The Declaration of Paris, 1861," first published in *Historical Essays* (1891).

To Frederick William Seward

London 30 January 1862.

My dear Sir¹

I hope you will excuse me for taking up your time, and not consider that this letter wants notice of any kind. I neither want an office, nor a contract, nor a pension, nor money, nor in fact any favor of any sort. My main object in writing is to express what I've long wanted to do, the extreme satisfaction we all feel here in your father's course, and personally the great admiration I have for his productions as Secretary of State. I have done my little best here to make people understand him, but till lately nothing would have any effect. Now the tide is turning, and if people here don't like him yet, they are at least beginning to fear him.

In order to encourage this gratifying frame of mind, I have suggested to Mr Weed the reprinting here of the diplomatic correspondence about the Declaration of Paris, and its circulation as a popular pamphlet. Mr Weed has assented and I hope we shall manage to get it all over Parliament. But as this is but a portion of the whole volume and as all is valuable, it seems to me that some good might be done if you could send over a dozen or so more copies of your Foreign Correspondence.

The truth is, we want light here. It is no business of mine to make suggestions or to offer advice, and I don't want to be so understood. But Parliament is soon to meet and the battle will be very savage. Our friends have got to be stuffed with statistics and crammed with facts. These facts will probably take a regular range. The point attacked most furiously will be, no doubt, the blockade. The Southerners will parade a great number of vessels which have run it. Our side must show an equal or greater number either captured, or chased, and must have at hand any evidence there may be from southern sources of the difficulties found in escaping our cruisers.

Also official statements if possible of prices ruling in the South, and of the articles most scarce &c &c &c. Another point will be on slavery. We shall be accused of indifference to it, and Mr Cameron's retreat will be dragged out as a proof.² Surely something may be done to give the lie to this. If some real emancipation step could be taken, it would be the next best thing to taking Richmond for us here. The plan of Mason will probably be to dodge his antecedents. Anything peculiarly damnatory about him would tell strongly here.

Mr Weed is working like a giant, and I don't know how we could get on without him. Bishop McIlvaine too is doing good, I believe, though he finds it tough work. I imagine that even England contains no tougher heads than those of the Episcopal dignitaries and their subordinates. Wilson, however is rather too savage to be persuasive, and after one battle we had, when he and I almost scalped an individual at a tea-party, I retired from business and now never open my mouth to an Englishman on politics. This makes pretty much the whole force we have, and our success is not so complete as I could wish. If it weren't for Mr Weed we should be in a very bad way.

If you can get the time to see to it, a stock of reliable information on the points likely to be attacked, will be a most important assistance here. The more exclusive it is, the better.

I wish, if you remember it, you would tell your father that we cling to him as our sheet anchor here. In fact I believe he will before long take his right position among the English. He would have held it long since if it hadn't been for people on your side of the water.

My father has to be so cautious that it is next to impossible for him to effect much directly, and his greatest triumph will be to make no blunders. This seems also to be the policy of some of our Generals. The principle may be carried too far, but since Bull Run I feel a shudder at the idea of risking anything.

Waiting in fear and trembling for the next news, I remain

Very truly Yrs Henry B. Adams.

Hon. F. W. Seward &c &c &c

MS: NRU

1. Frederick William Seward (1830-1915), son of William Henry Seward, associate editor of Thurlow Weed's *Albany Journal* 1851-1861, assistant secretary of state 1861-1869, 1877-1881.

2. Because of corruption in the letting of War Department contracts, Lincoln was pressed to dismiss Sec. Simon Cameron, but because Cameron made himself a spokesman for emancipation, dismissal was politically difficult. Lincoln eased Cameron out of the cabinet in January 1862 by appointing him minister to Russia.