

Documents

SOME LETTERS OF JESSE D. BRIGHT TO WILLIAM H. ENGLISH
(1842-1863)

The political career of Jesse David Bright, a powerful Democratic leader of Indiana in his day, is full of interest. He was elected to the Senate of the United States in 1845, and while a member of that body, this able politician of Madison, became the boss of his party in Indiana. He loved his friends and served them generously. He hated his enemies with intensity and fought them vigorously. In regard to the slavery question he was a conservative. In the pre-convention contest of 1856, the Senator threw his support to Buchanan, and, through his power over the Indiana Democracy, did more to bring about the defeat of Douglas and the nomination of the Pennsylvanian, than any other leader in the party. In January, 1860, the Democrats of Indiana staged a successful revolt against Senator Bright in their State Convention. His expulsion from the Senate came in February 1862. The next year, though Democrats controlled the Indiana Legislature on joint-ballot, they refused to vindicate Bright by returning him to the Senate. Instead, a younger man who had been one of the leaders in the revolt of 1860 was chosen—David Turpie. Soon after this, Jesse D. Bright took up his residence in Kentucky, where he served two terms in the state Legislature. He died in 1875.

The recipient of the Bright letters printed below, was William H. English (1822-1896), who was born in Lexington, Scott County, Indiana, where he lived until 1863. He served as a member of the constitutional convention of 1850, and as a member of the Indiana Legislature. He was a Representative in the national House for four terms (1853-1861). During the Civil War he moved to Indianapolis, where he was one of the founders of the First National Bank. He served as president of the institution until 1877. He wrote a two-volume history, *The Conquest of the Country Northwest of the Ohio River and Life of George Rogers Clark*. This work was published in 1896, the year of the author's death.

The originals of the letters here reproduced are in the Smith Memorial Library at Indianapolis, and it is through

the kindness of Miss Florence Venn, who is in charge of the Smith Library, that they are published at this time.

[LETTERS OF SENATOR JESSE D. BRIGHT]

Madison Nov. 8th 1842

W. H. English Esq.

Your polite note of the 3rd Inst. inviting me to attend a Meeting of my Democratic Friends in Scott on the 14th ultimo¹ is received. It will afford me much pleasure to be with you on that occasion & unless I am unavoidably detained in Ky. whither I start on Wedn[e]sday next, I shall certainly be on the ground. I am more ready & willing to loose [sic] time in aiding on the good work recently begun in Ohio Delaware Pennsylvania & other States, than in any other one thing I could be called upon to act in. Every Mail brings news of more Screws getting loose & that Hides of all kind are low, very low, & falling

Respectfully Your Friend

Jesse D Bright

P S Inform your Father that I am one of the number that does not believe the Report of his being *pleased* & intending to support Whig doctrine this Winter

Madison March 4th 1843

Dr Sir

I owe you with other of my Democrattick² Friends in Scott [County] an apology for not attending your Court & addressing the People. There is but one thing that could have occurred to prevent my so doing, & *that very thing did occur. Sickness.* One of my children has been dangerously ill for the last 2 weeks, so much so that I have not left my House 2 Hours at a time. I feel that I have been guilty of disappointing my Friends, (a thing by the way I seldom do) but hope under the circumstances I will be excused. I shall attend our Congressional Convention in May at your Town³

Your Friend

Jesse D Bright

Madison April 21st 1843

W H. English Esq.

I ought to have answered your kind favor of the 17th Inst. sooner, but have been from home. I have not time now, to say all I would like to say about the Petition White⁴ presented at the Whig Convention & as I will be at our Congressional Convention on the 1st Saturday in May & address the People, you with other Friends will hear from me on this head. I am truly glad to find that you take such a deep interest

¹ The author evidently intended to write *proximo*.

² Like many others of his day the Senator was prone to carry a *k* at the end of words ending in *ic*.

³ Lexington, Scott County, Indiana.

⁴ Albert S. White, Whig member of the United States Senate from Indiana, 1839-1845.

in the Democratic cause. You have it in your power to do much in Scott County, your long residence there together with an extensive acquaintance gives you a decided advantage over most men. Pardon me for making one suggestion to you "Secure the Friendship & support of the *young men*, they more than old men control elections. I hope to see you represent that County soon. My best respects to your Father

Your Friend

Jesse D Bright

Madison Sept 5th 1844

Dr Sir

Yours of the 31st August is just received. If nothing unforeseen occurs, I will be at [—]⁵ Fork on the 11th at Walnut Ridge in Washington Co on the 12th and at either Lexington or Paris⁶ on the 14th. I am going hither & thither in all directions & can hardly tell to day, where I ought to go to morrow. The list of appointments lately made by the Democratic State Central Committee will give us something like System after the 14th however. Adopt as your Motto "Fight on" & we will beat them

Your Friend

Jesse D Bright

P S All the paper in the House I write from.

Washington, Sept. 2nd 1850

My dear Sir

I herewith Enclose you Letter of Mr. Edwards—caviling & special pleading over your claim in behalf of Hannah Berry Widow &c.⁷ I suppose you can meet and overcome the objections he raises.

I enclose you a letter from Mr. Henly. I presume he is under the impression you are in this City. I am sorry there should be any misunderstanding between you & him; and cannot doubt, mutual explanation will restore former friendly relations. I will not permit myself to doubt this.

You have been, of mutual Service to each other, and may often be again.

He has drawn an order in my favour for the assets in your hands. and asks me to make a satisfactory arrangement with you as to his indebtedness. This I will do if you require it, when we meet, which I hope will not be later than the last of this month. Meantime, write and let me Know. what you require

The California "Territorial & Texas Bounday Bills" are still pending before the House. The Texas Boundary Bill was on yester-

⁵ The omitted word is abbreviated in the manuscript, and can not be made out. It may be *Est.*, an abbreviation for *East*. If so, the speaking engagement was probably scheduled for some place on the East Fork of White River.

⁶ Walnut Ridge was a small post office in Washington County, and Paris a town in Jefferson County, ten or twelve miles north of Lexington.

⁷ The enclosed letter was written by James L. Edwards of the United States Pension Office. It related to a claim of the Widow Berry to a pension.

day made the "Special Order of the day" for to day at 12 Oclk. and from day to day thereafter, until disposed of. There are many conflicting opinions as to the fate of these measures. The Administration is doing all in there power, to push them through. *Extremes*, unite in the House, as they did in the Senate, but my own opinion is they will all pass.

Fields, I understand, from Mrs. Jackson has returned home to St Louis. I would advise you to write Henley. Hoping to hear from you Soon. I remain

Your Friend

Jesse D Bright

Madison Oct 14th 1850

My dear Sir

Yours of the 10th is recd. I know your feeling toward me to[o] well to believe all the falsehoods that enemies can circulate will alienate your feelings. I have used no such language as you say is attributed to me. I shall be out soon when we will confer on many matters face to face.

Your Friend

Jesse D Bright

Washington Dec 21st 1850

My young friend

Yours of the 16th Inst is recd. also enclosure relative to the claim of Hannah Berry.

Edwards has been removed and Heath⁸ of Virginia appointed in his stead. I find the impression here is that Heath will open the door wide and let in scores of claims, heretofore rejected by Edwards. I am afraid of it, but yours I believe a just claim & I shall seek an Early opportunity to bring the matter before Heath and ask a favorable decision. My correspondence will occupy most of my time [from] now on until the Senatorial Election is over. You say Jo Wright⁹ is a Candidate. This I have believed would be the case ever since Gov. Crittenden¹⁰ was invited to our State—notwithstanding Joseph has been saying all the time, up to my coming away, that he was not, & would not be. He has acted unfairly and shows in several matters that will disclose themselves, that He is a Trickster. An open and manly competitor I respect & esteem, but one of these subterannean operators, "God deliver me from." I want you English to confer freely with my Partner Jo. Chapman & have Elisha G¹¹ do the same. He (Chapman) will put you and your Father in possession of some facts I have collected here, and I should be glad to have your Father give Joseph his special attention

⁸ James E. Heath succeeded Edwards as Commissioner of Pensions.

⁹ Joseph A. Wright, Governor of Indiana, 1849-1857.

¹⁰ John J. Crittenden, noted Whig leader of Kentucky. Elected Governor of Kentucky in 1848.

¹¹ Probably Elisha G. English, father of W. H. English to whom the letter was written.

Before this reaches you P M Kent J H Lane Doct Ellis Page Chapman¹² & Jo Wright will have commenced working there machinery against me. I know you will leave nothing undone to counteract their movements. Give my kind regards to your father. I have not bored him with letters & I need not advise *him*, because he knows instinctively what is right & how to help his friends. I wish you & him would both write me often

Burn this

Your Friend

J. D Bright

Madison Nov 21st 1851

My Dear Sir

Yours of the 19th Inst is recd. I am sorry—truly sorry—I was not here when the Major & yourself came up. I am more than anxious to see you before my departure, which will be on Tuesday next. If any thing prevents your coming, I shall take advantage of your friendly letter and confer with you and the Major¹³ by letter freely. Come up on Sunday if possible. Lane will be here on Monday perhaps Sunday.

As Ever & forever

Your Friend

Jesse D Bright

W H English Esq.

Confidential

Washington Dec 16th 1851

My Young friend

I have received yours of _____¹⁴ date and should have answered it ere this, but have been very busy, and withall, not very well. *You* know how to excuse *me*, for delays in such matters.

I am very sorry to hear of the collision [sic] between you and Doct Davis,¹⁵ and I beg you reconcile differences, unless you feel your *honor* has been assailed, and even then, I mistake Doct Davis, if he is not ready and willing, at all times, to meet a political friend, more than half way.

It is unnecessary for me to say a word to you in reference to the Approaching Convention. You *instinctively* know my views & feelings, and I think know me well enough to bear testimony to my devotion to the *true men* and *measures* of our Party, but there are some things I do not wish to be asked to do, and that I do not wish to see hundreds

¹² The persons referred to were: Phineas M. Kent of New Albany; James H. Lane (son of Amos Lane, and later well known as General Jim Lane of Kansas) of Dearborn County; Dr. E. W. H. Ellis of Goshen, who ran a paper in Indianapolis, *The Statesman* for a period (1850-1852); Jacob Page Chapman an able editor of Terre Haute and later (1841-1854) of Indianapolis. He it was who changed the *Indiana Democrat* to the *Indiana Sentinel* (1841). He retired from the *Sentinel* in 1850. In 1853, he started a weekly, *The Chanticleer*, which ran for a year.

¹³ Major Elisha G. English, father of William H. English.

¹⁴ The space is blank in the original letter.

¹⁵ Dr. John W. Davis of Carlisle, Indiana, member of the national House, 1835-37, 1839-41, 1843-47, and Speaker of the House, 1845-1847. Both Davis and English were members of the lower branch of the Indiana Legislature in the first session after the new constitution went into effect. They were both candidates for the speakership. Davis won, and a temporary enmity arose.

of voters in the 2d Congressional District asked to do, & that is swallow such a dose as Jos A Wright & Dr. Ellis at our October Elections in 1852. For Heavens sake English, do all in your power to save me, and those of our Party who know these Creatures, as well as you and I do; from passing such an ordeal. I know your devotion to Party and Democratic principles, and well do I know, and appreciate your friendship for me, and I beg you, to let no temporary jar between Doct Davis & yourself, drive you from his support. He can beat Wright for the Nomination¹⁶ if the sound Democrats of the Party will take hold of him. But this matter I need not argue to you, do as you think right, and as a sense of public duty prompts, and I shall acquiesce. Let me warn you, a young and growing man & one I love and esteem, not to form any combinations with any interests to alter our Congressional Districts, and above all beware of that mass of moral putrefaction Ellis, & his Coajutor Kent¹⁷ & Co. You can guess who the Company is, I know. Write me what you intend to do, or try to do, in these matters. Who will be our candidates for State Officers?

You will see from a Paper I sent you that I moved in the Senate in reference to Offices, and I now tell you, I intend to keep moving, until, I move you where you deserve to be, at any rate until we restore the old rule, and come back to "biennial" [biennial] elections and then you can take your chance.

English I shall not, *forget you*. Do not relax in these matters about which I have heretofore talked to you & which I have so hastily alluded to in this hurried scroll.

Your friend

J D Bright

P S Go and talk to Davis and ask him to let you read my letter to him.

J B

[Endorsed on back "From my friend" J. D. Bright]

Indianapolis Jan 26th 1852

Friend English

Nothing occrd since I wrote last week. The first move in Senatorial matters comes off tomorrow night. Then our friends are to determine when they will make nominations, if at all, before an Election is ordered by the two Houses. I am putting forth all my power to bring about the right nominations, and if this is done, I shall try very hard to bring on this Election. Many of our friends here think this cannot be done. The Abolition[ists] swear it never shall be unless they get one of the Senators & this *we* swear never shall be.

By Thursday or Friday next, I think I can give you some definite information as to the probable result. Slack¹⁸ I understand declines

¹⁶ Nomination for Governor in 1852. Wright was elected Governor in 1849 under the old constitution for three years and was eligible to succeed himself for four years under the new constitution of 1850-1851. He was nominated and elected in 1852, and served the first four-year term under the new constitution.

¹⁷ Phineas M. Kent.

¹⁸ James Richard Slack for many years judge of the twenty-eighth judicial circuit of Indiana.

absolutely the Nebraska judgeship. Crowe¹⁹ is not standing up as I could desire, but I hope he will come right. Doct McLean²⁰ is *all man* More in a few days

Your friend
J D Bright

Washington Feb 10, 1852

Friend English

I am proud of you. Your standing up course in reference to Congressional Districts and against the efforts of certain hireling jobbers to get a road from the "Tax payers" in Ind for \$600,000, which is well worth *One Million Two Hundred Thousand*, entitles you to my thanks, and the thanks of every man who understand[s] the facts. There is always a just reward in reserve for a faithful public servant.

The enclosed is [an] Editorial²¹ from the *Sentinel*, written by the President of the road I presume. The *Sentinel* is likely to prove a valuable auxiliary to our cause in Ind. *This letter is for your own eye & no other mans*, unless you choose to shew it to Graham.²² I will write you more at length in a few days.

Your friend
J D Bright

Washington Feb 16th 1852

My dear Sir

Yours of the 5th Inst is recd. I am much obliged to you for your attentions in the way of interesting letters. You recollect the old saying, that it is always "darker just before day, than at any period of the 24 Hours." I see nothing to discourage. Corruption cannot long go unpunished, when the "People" are jurors. The set of Creatures you mention, are on the surface now, only because, they have not been properly attended to. Time with the aid of a few such open gallant honest determined Democrats as you and some others I might name, have proved yourselves to be, will remedy, what you now appear to regard as permanent evils. Although I am not in the same District with your Father, I am not so far away, that I shall ever forget his friendship for me, or refuse to come up, with zeal, to any work he may call for me in his behalf. I would rather have had Scott²³ with us, but on the

¹⁹ Possibly the Rev. John Finley Crowe, pastor of Hanover Presbyterian Church for many years and founder of Hanover College.

²⁰ Probably William E. McLean, at this time editor of a Democratic weekly paper, *The Terre Haute Journal*.

²¹ The enclosed editorial, clipped from the *Indiana Sentinel*, advocated the sale of the state's interest in the Madison and Indianapolis Railway. John Brough afterwards Governor of Ohio was the President of this road. Senator Bright's brother, Michael G. Bright, had acquired a large interest in the Jeffersonville Railroad. Brough and M. G. Bright were very hostile to each other at the time this letter was written.

²² The Senator here referred to his brother Michael Graham Bright who was, of course, deeply interested in the railroad question under consideration.

²³ Scott County in which the English family lived. In this sentence, the Senator is writing of the forming of congressional districts by the Legislature of Indiana. William H. English was at this time a member of the lower branch of the Indiana General Assembly. At the beginning of the session, he was beaten in the speakership contest by John W. Davis. It was not long before Davis clashed with the members of the house and resigned. Then English was chosen in his place.

whole, we ought to thank God it is no worse, in view of the combinations you speak of. I want you on receipt of this letter to confer with Graham²⁴ about our approaching Convention. And I know you will do what is right and for the best.

As you intimate in your letter, I cannot be at home always, but when I am not there *I am here*, and as Benton once said I will be with these "Political Gamblers, Wright & Kent Ellis & Co. at Phillippi" *Mark that* You ask me if get the *Sentinel* !!! I do!!!

I do not despair of a repeal of the resolution of Benton in the U. S. Senate, but I have seen no time since the defeat of *My* Resolution that I would have thought it prudent to call up the subject. I am on the "look out," *you may rely*, and have you in my eye all the time.

Of course I will be a Delegate to the National Convention. In Kentucky, they appointed over fifty from the State, including all the Democratic Members in Congress. They done the same in Louisiana Miss & Missouri. Of course Indiana, will do the same, unless, a few men are to order things there own way in the state. Present my kind regards to Mrs. English & your Father, & believe me as ever

Your friend

J D Bright

P S This letter is for your own eye *only*—Strictly Confidential. I hope to see you here soon after the Legislature adjourns. Meantime write me often.

Washington May 15th 1852

My dear Sir

Come to the Convention if possible, we need Delegates from Ind who *feel* and *act upon the great questions of the times as you do*. If however, you *cannot come*, send me a letter, asking me to act in your stead. This will be ratified I know by the other Delegates, and I feel quite sure would be acceptable to the great body of our Party. We have strong hopes for Lane.²⁵ Genl Cass however is greatly stronger than any other man.

Can he ever get $\frac{2}{3}$. *Regard this as Confidential.*

Your friend

J D Bright

W H English Esq.

Senate Chamber U S.

Aug. 22, 1852.

My young friend,

Yours of the 6th inst. advising me of your nomination for Congress, from the 2 District, is received. Judging the future, by the past, there is nothing you undertake, that you will not do. Hence, I consider your election a "fixed fact," and such a result will do no man, more good, than my self, not even your honored father. I hope to be able to accept

²⁴ Michael Graham Bright.

²⁵ General Joseph Lane.

your invitation, to speak at the points, named in your letter, but whether I can, depends upon the time I get home and the state of my health. I am far from being well, and could not now, undergo, the fatigue of an extended canvass. I am in the daily receipt of letters, inviting me to speak at different points, in and out of our state, most of which, thus far, I have had to decline. I intend to return home by the White Sulphur Springs, and may, if I find that I derive any benefit, from the use of water, remain there ten or twelve days, in which event, I would not reach home before the 20th of September. I am very anxious to be there, in time to take part, in the Presidential and Congressional canvasses. Though I must be permitted to say, that I believe Pierce and King, will distance the track, without much grooming. I have, and shall continue, to send you, such documents as I think will benefit you in the canvass. Bear in mind, the old maxim—"Continual Dropping will wear a stone." Adopting this motto, and working up to it, I believe you can be elected by one thousand majority. With my kind regards to your own, your father and family, I remain,

Truly Yours,

Jesse D Bright

W. H. English Esq.

P. S. By a resolution, lately introduced in the Senate, by Mr. Merriwether,²⁶ of Kentucky, calling for the amount of money, received by Gen Pierce and Gen Scott, out of the National Treasury. We expect to obtain the information, you desire. So soon as I receive it, it shall be forwarded to you.

B.

[This letter was written by a secretary]

(Literal copy)²⁷

Washington Nov 21st/52

My young friend—

Yours of the 11th Inst is received. I have been for the last four weeks, most of my time in Boston N Y & Phila. discharging my duty as a member of the come., elected by the Senate to investigate frauds, alledged to be perpetrating on the revenue laws of the U. S. Consequently have to neglect my correspondence. Had I not received yours of above date I should have written. You have anticipated many matters I intended to write about, of interest to us both. By the way I have often said "you were about the only one of my friends that always took the same view of things that I did, always right *instinctively*, and never failed in whatever you undertook. I will reply to your letter briefly & in the order you introduced the topicks. I take it for granted that what I write you is a sealed book from every man woman & child on earth except your father. *I have no secrets as to him.* You ask me who ought to be Senator in place of Gov Whitcomb. I answer Doct

²⁶ David Meriwether, Senator from Kentucky by appointment for the session of 1851-1852.

²⁷ The original letter of this date is not in the collection, but a copy in long-hand marked "Literal copy" is included.

Fitch or Charley Cathcart.²⁸ Fitch's geographical position is eligible, and above all he is a true democrat, a gentleman, a man of superior talents, *your friend, & my friend*. The Lord deliver me from the painful operation of sitting with Jos A Wright, Jno Pettit, Willis [?] A Gorman or Bill Brown as Colleagues.²⁹ They want all the qualities that I have ascribed to Doct Fitch, and in addition, are my personal enemies, unless it is Pettit. Cathcart is a good man & a man of Talents. I beg you to give this matter your attentions. It is all important to me, and whatever affects me affects you & whater you politically[,] affects me. I hope that on the receipt of this you will write me what you intend to do. *Doct Fitch is expecting your aid*. He will write you.

As to a seat in the Cabinet of Genl Pierce—I tell you in all frankness & candour, I do not desire it. I would for a hundred reasons, rather remain in the U S Senate. This is now the extent of my ambition. To all of my friends who have spoken to me on this subject (and they have been many in every direction) I have held the same language. *I desire no office, but the one I have, this I do desire to hold another Term* and you are the only person I have said so to.

Gov Whitcomb's brother the Rev. David Whitcomb is now here inventorying the Gov's effects.³⁰ I want to see you very much in reference to that stock you hold. Can you not come on and spend a week or 10 days in December. I wish to God you could, we would then talk matters over. I must see you before the senatorial election comes off & we must by the 11 March close the matter above refered to. Then I will talk to you about my little favor. Write & say when you will come. It must be before the Legislature meets. My kind regards to your father. After you have read this hastily written scroll please *remai* it to me. Latterly, I am afraid of letters out.

Your friend

J D Bright

Washington Dec. 5/52

My Young Friend

I have been anxiously awaiting an answer to my letter of week before last, informing me you would come on here in time to return *before the Legislature meets*.

You must come, I must see you. You are the man that can work out an important political problem. Important to you & myself & our

²⁸ Dr. Graham N. Fitch of Logansport was elected United States Senator from Indiana in 1857. He was a member of the national House from his district from 1849-1853. Charles W. Cathcart, was appointed to serve in the United States Senate in 1852 on the death of James Whitcomb. He served until the Legislature could act in 1853.

²⁹ John Pettit was the successful candidate before the Indiana Legislature in 1853, and served until March 4, 1855, that is to the end of Whitcomb's term. William A. Gorman was at this time a member of the national House, 1849-1853. William J. Brown ("Done" Brown) was the editor of the *Indiana Sentinel*, and a member of the national House, 1843-45 and 1849-51. In December, 1849, during the intense and extended contest over the speakership, Brown came within one vote of election. Very probably he would have been elected but for the discovery by southerners that he was receiving Free Soil votes. Wright, Pettit, Gorman, and Brown were all members of the Democratic party, as was Senator Bright.

³⁰ James Whitcomb, Governor of Indiana for two terms, 1843-1849, was elected Senator in 1847. He died in New York City on October 4, 1852.

Friends. I can say to you, that which I know you will execute and it is only by seeing you, face to face, that I can hope to make matters understood.

If you can spare time, *let nothing else prevent.* Telegraph me whether you will come.

Your friend

J D Bright

Washington January 25th 1853

My Young friend

Yours of the 16th Inst is received. I am greatly disappointed at the defeat of our mutual friend Doct Fitch, and if one half the men for him, had done there duty, half as well as you & I, the result would have been different. I am disappointed nay mortified, but not the least discouraged. Honesty will prevail of [over] dishonesty in poloticks as in every other relation of life. The late result is but a partial & temporary triumph. I have not time this morning (with over 300 letters before me for answers) to enter into details, but I will before long try and take time to go into matters more fully. As to you having impaired yourself for the future—Nonsense—You have made friends, as every man does, by advocating the right & denouncing the wrong.

As matters have turned out, I dismiss the Cabinet from my mind. Nothing could now tempt me to resign my place in the Senate, this would be suicidal to both myself & friends.

I have *marked down* the names you gave me, & with your aid & a list of others I have in my eye, that I recognize as *true friends*, we will prepare for the future & prove to the world "that we met them [at] Phillipi." I am distinctly against any negotiations with Bill Brown.⁸¹ I *bid him defiance*. I would not contribute a Dime toward purchasing him out he will find his level soon & have to sell out or be driven out.

With Pettit I shall have little or nothing to do. I do not recognize him as a gentleman or as my friend, and this you know, is enough to determine my rule of action.⁸²

Set your House in order we are to have War, but it will be a short one.⁸³ Such creatures as Jo Wright, Bill Brown, Jim Lane & there tools, cannot prevail against honest men. Nothing definite about the Cabinet yet. Write often even if I do not answer.

My kind regards to your father & family, & believe me truly

Your friend

J D Bright

Madison Oct 15th 1853

Friend English

Write G W Hargitt of the Jacksonian Rushville Ind. the reasons

⁸¹ William J. Brown.

⁸² After John Pettit was elected to the Senate, he and the Brights, Senator Jesse D. and Michael G., became friends and worked in harmony.

⁸³ He was not predicting the Civil War but a political war between his own group of Democratic leaders of Indiana and an opposing group led by Joseph A. Wright.

why you could not accommodate him & gratify me by a loan of a Thousand Dollars at this time. This is necessary.

Your friend
J D Bright

Senate Chamb[er]
Jan 31/54

Friend English

I am almost as much interested in your political positions & future success as yourself. Hence, you will pardon me for venturing to advise you not *at this time* to go into Caucus or make any committals against the Bills now before Congress for the organization for territories. I *know* the value of the advise I give Go to your *friends* for council always, not your *enemies*.

Truly yours
Bright

Senate Chamber
Dec 7th 1854

Friend English

Please lend me either Two Hundred Dollars in gold or your Check for that sum. I want the bearer to pay it this evening to Col Weller.⁸⁴ If a check make it payable to him & oblige

Your friend
Bright

Friend English

Permit me to withdraw my invitation to you for dinner to day and extend it to Tuesday next at 4 o'clock.

J D Bright

Jan 1st 1855

Madison Oct 20th/56

Friend English

Success to you my young Roman I as well pleased over your triumphant election as I am at anything that has occurred in the political world, for years.⁸⁵

I filled your appointment at Utica & I owe it to your friends to say, whether I did not do it right.

My kind regards to your father & Mrs. English.

Speak to McLean & Crowe in my case

Truly Yours
J D Bright

⁸⁴ John B. Weller, a colleague in the Senate from California.

⁸⁵ William H. English was first elected to the national House in 1852. In 1854, he was again successful, being the only Democratic Congressman to carry his district in Indiana. He won a third time in 1856, though a vigorous effort was made to defeat him.

Washington
April 16th 57

Friend English

I know you have a right to complain of my inattention to your letter of the 29th ultimo, but as God is my judge, I have not had time since you left here to *read* my letters, much less to *answer* them. I have been going to and fro—here & there—for friends who are either here in person, or have been here, and those who would write me; but I will not enter upon what I have done, or am doing, for that would fill a Book. Leave all this until we meet, and then if it is not referred to, there will be nothing lost. Office, Office, Office, Office Seekers, Office Seekers, Office Seekers, how these words ring in my ears. You & Fitch have escaped that kind of wrath and persecution described in divine revelation by going home, however, I am not discussing the points I set down to notice.

I wish I could make a trip West with the Major & yourself, but I cannot get off before the 1st or 10 of June and of course you must start sooner if you intend to attend the Kansas Land sales.

I hope and suppose there is no doubt but that I will get home before you come, and if so, will of course see you. Your information as to my having urged any particular man for a Cabinet appointment from Indiana, *After* Mr Buchanan reached Washington is an entire mistake. I was asked to do so and declined for reasons entirely satisfactory to myself. Perhaps I ought to say that I presume I could have formed a part of Mr Buchanans Cabinet any time before his inauguration but this I told you on one occasion was a matter that I did not want to talk about. It has annoyed me beyond measure, and I will repeat to you, that there is no respectable office in the U S. that I would not rather take than a Cabinet place, and I think the men who now have them reason somewhat as I do.

Yours Truly
J D Bright

Indianapolis
August 19th 57

Friend English

Yours of yesterday is received. I am very much obliged to you for your pressing invitation to make you a visit, but my dear friend there is no rest for me, I have been sick for the last 5 weeks (until within the last 10 days), and in this way have fallen so far behind with my business and correspondence that I have almost despaired of ever catching up, but still I must try. I shall go Home to morrow, and hope to see you sometime soon—indeed I intend to try this fall to spend a day at Lexington, mainly to visit you & the Major but I hope to see you sooner than this can be.

Everything looks well for our Party in this State. A few Traitors have been trying to raise some excitement but their efforts have proven a *dead failure*. In short, the Wright & Co concern have failed, and in the absence of their cowardly leader, the other partners have gone into

liquidation. But more on this head when we meet. I *know* now who turned Sam English out, the very man I believed done it on my first hearing it. H———[?] Cobb³⁶ I presume wrote you fully and freely on the subject. *He told me he would.*

I am for encouraging your Uncle to expose the hypocrisy & double dealing of one man toward him.

My kind regards to Mrs. English & your Father & family.

Your friend

J D Bright

Friend English

I will meet you on Tuesday, *after* the Election at any place you will direct, (I prefer New Albany) and go with you to Livonia.³⁷ Write so that I will get it on Monday. I go to night to Lafayette.

Your friend

J D Bright

Indianapolis
Oct 9th/57

Executive Session [Senate]
March 9/58

Friend English

I am obliged to you for your note of to day. I was under the impression our engagement was *Monday* morning 9 o'clock and I attended at the Room of the PM Genl & at the Room of Mr Dundas. They will inform you what [I] hoped in reference to Mr Mathers.

I am sorry I could not have met you as promised in order to compare notes about Kansas, but I know you have not sought by anything you have said or done, to embarrass or strike at me. It is to be regretted that *you & I* could not have harmonized on this question. *hope, sincerely hope*, we yet will be able to do so. I know we will, if you adhere to your determination in reference to the Amendment, that I feel sure the Senate will agree to.

I should call and see you to night, but I have an engagement to dine with Gov. Floyd³⁸ this evening therefore I cannot hope to see you before your speech goes to press, and allow me to appeal to you again, to conform as near as you can, to the views of the great democratic party, which is now assailed fiercely enough, God knows, by its ancient enemies

Your friend

Bright

³⁶ Samuel English was evidently a brother of Major Elisha G. English, the father of William H. English. Howell Cobb of Georgia was Secretary of the Treasury under President Buchanan. Perhaps he was the person referred to in this letter. The name as written begins with *H*, but bears no resemblance to *Howell*. If not Howell Cobb, the man mentioned must have been a politician or newspaper man who knew both Bright and English.

³⁷ Livonia, a town in the western part of Washington County, Indiana.

³⁸ John B. Floyd of Virginia was at this time Secretary of War.

Washington City, D. C.
August 30, 1858

My Dear Sir,

I want you to join Dr. Fitch and myself in urging the appointment of our friend Hon. John Pettit³⁹ for Chief Justice in Kansas Territory. I hope you will agree with us that he is highly qualified for the place, was an *Original true* friend of this Administration, and that his selection would be *personally* acceptable to you. Enclose me the letter to Jeffersonville Ia., and oblige.

Yours Truly,
J D Bright

Hon. W. H. English,
Lexington, Ia.

Jeffersonville Oct 16/59

Friend English

I need not go into explanations. You know why I have not met you before, and agreed upon a plan of operation, as to how we are to proceed to close matters with Dunham.⁴⁰ I will come up to Lexington one day this week, *if I am able to go*, provided you will not come down here. But as much as I wish to go up and visit you and the Major, and attend to a little business at Lexington, I am almost afraid to try it. I am as stiff as a foundered Horse, when I am down it is with the greatest difficulty I rise, and hence I say that *I would rather meet you in Jeffersonville on Thursday or Friday next*, and agree upon a line of policy. I agree with you, that whatever is done, should be done before we go East. Please let me hear from you by return mail

Very Truly Yours
J D Bright

Indianapolis
Sept 23/1860

My dear Sir

I was greatly in hopes I should have met you here to day. On receipt of this write me at Jeffersonville and let me know if I have an appointment out for a speech at Lexington. If so what day and hour.

You must meet us at New Albany on Wednesday & Seymour Thursday. I tell you now, it is *important* that you should

Your friend
J D Bright

P S. The work goes bravely on, we are gaining every day.⁴¹

³⁹ See letter of January 25, 1853, above, for Bright's opinion of Pettit at that time. President Buchanan appointed Pettit to the place in Kansas Territory.

⁴⁰ Cyrus L. Dunham of Salem, Indiana, who was at this time Secretary of State (Indiana).

⁴¹ Bright was at this time canvassing for the Breckenridge and Lane ticket in Indiana.

Washington Dec /60

Friend English

I was sorry you could not find time to write me before I left my farm. You discover, that the threats of the assassins of character in the West, who have been pursuing me in their licentious sheets because I will not adopt there opinions, and allow them to control my action, did not prevent me from exercising all the rights of a citizen & Senator. I am here, with a stout heart & pure conscience and yet dare do what I think right. There is not power on earth to make an Abolitionist out of me. The Presidents Message⁴² is a more conservative paper than was generally expected from him. The radicals are not at all pleased with its tone, while the more conservative practical minded men here think it means the cold shoulder to the Fire & Sword branch of the Republican party.

I confess I do not know what it looks to, as yet I see no green spot in the distant future.

There is some talk I understand of their expelling me on account of my known disloyalty. Let it come, I have got so that I believe nothing I read and am not surprised at anything that takes place.

However I did not intend writing about politicks but rather about business, and what I say in this respect is *confidential*. My brother M G B is hard up for some funds and I suppose (as usual) I have got to help him.⁴³ I want you to tell me candidly what you think I may rely upon this Winter and Spring from the Dunham fund, this is all, I do not want to borrow, but to collect all possible. See how much you can get for my little Farm in the terms you and the Major are selling your bonds at, and write me. I am very anxious to sell, and want you to find a purchaser for me, when it does not interfere with your sales.

Please see that my Taxes are paid & collect enough rent to do it with.

My kind regards to your good Lady, Father & family

No fusion with Douglass Democracy
in the 8th Jan Convention B

As ever

Yours truly

J D Bright

Washington
March 31/61

My dear friend

On rereading your letter of the 26th Inst. I have thought best to drop you this line to Indianapolis in reference to the enquiry you make about Banking operations lest it may not be in time, if I delay to meet you at Lexington as proposed in my letter of this morning.

If you decide to go into the Branch [Bank] at Jeffersonville, and

⁴² The reference is to the last annual message of President Buchanan.

⁴³ Michael G. Bright deserved help from his brother, the Senator, when he asked for it, so it would seem. A citizen of Madison, Indiana who knew the brothers well wrote: "No one knows how much his brother Jesse was indebted to him [Michael G.] for his successful political career. He was his brother's mentor and counselor. All his movements on the political chess-board were to check the king of his brother's antagonist." (William Wesley Woolen, *Biographical and Historical Sketches of Early Indiana*, 453). Both Senator Bright and his brother Michael G. became quite wealthy.

give your sole personal attention to the transaction of the business, I will put in Twenty five Thousand Dollars cash, and if the thing bids fair to work smooth, I would go Fifty Thousand.

I have sent notes refered to in former letter with the memoranda of M S Bright.⁴⁴

Truly yours
J D Bright

Mail Boat
Sunday Apl 14/61

Friend English

Yours from Indianapolis is received. I am on my way to Washington to join my family, who I find from letters & dispatches are very much concerned over the present condition of affairs. I shall be there for the next 8 or 10 days, will write you as soon as I get there and look around a few hours.

The news from Charleston will deter you from coming to any conclusion at present. If you determine however to launch the Bank project come "Peace" or come "War" you will have to go to N Y, and in that event come via Washington and I will go over with you. My advise is let matters rest for a few days or weeks

Very truly yours

J D Bright

Washington
July 7th 1861

Friend English

I send by this mail a letter intended for Dunham's eye. Send it to him if you choose.

I ought to have answered yours of the 2nd of June earlier, but I was in hopes I should have had time to have run up to your House when West, last month. I intended to have no more transactions of any name or nature with Mr Dunham, let matters rest where they are as far as Securities are concerned. Have you been able to get the \$575.00 due from H Westphal. The reason I ask is that I was going to ask you to put it to my credit in the Madison Bank.

The land Warrant returned from Minnesota you may enclose to me at this place. I want no more real estate in a government where the Writ of "Habeas Corpus" is ignored by a Military Mob.

I wish to God you would come on and spend a few days or week while we are in Session. I have got a good spare Room in my House, would treat you as well as I know how, and be more than happy to have you.

As to the bitterness you speak of being manifested toward me by a certain class of "Douglass *Best Lackeys*" in and congregating at Indianapolis, I beg you to believe me sincere when I say that I have them defied. I would not turn on my heel to make every such Traitor to principle and party my friend. Indeed I never will affiliate or consort with

⁴⁴ M. S. Bright was a nephew of the Senator.

such stock in private or political life. If I remain here as a Senator, I shall act as my judgment prompts, regardless of all consequence political or personal. Myself—I think I know my duty and I hope the sequel will prove I dare do it.

Write me

Yours Truly

J D Bright

At My Farm

Oct 8th 61

Friend English

I was glad to hear from you through my nephew M S Bright, and I am much obliged for the kind suggestions you made. It is very probable I will proceed against the lying editors of the Louisville *Democrat*.

This hostility on there part is attributable mainly to Hughes removal & Mathews apt [appointment]. I wish you would come up here and spend a few days with me, I am engaged improving my farm with fencing outbuildings &c &c. I shall be here for the next two or three weeks. I need not say that I would be delighted to have you come. Name a day and I will meet you at Warsaw [Kentucky]⁴⁵

Any balance you may have in your hands due me from [the] Funding business please give to M S Bright who will forward it to me.

My kind regards to Mrs. English & your Father & Mother

As ever & forever

Your friend

J D Bright

At My Farm

Nov 3 1861

Friend English

My nephew informs me that you spoke strongly of coming to see me. I want you to do so by all means. I shall go East about the 12th or 15th Inst. and would like to confer with you before I go, as to matters and things generally. Write and name the day you will come up on the Madison Packet or Mail Boat and I will have a Servant at the Warsaw Wharf with a Horse to bring you out. It is less than an hours ride. I am expecting Judge Chapman⁴⁶ of Madison up next Saturday. Come with him.

Write me during the week

Remember me to your good wife the Major & family

Your friend

J D Bright

⁴⁵ Warsaw, a Kentucky town on the Ohio, about thirty miles East of Madison, Indiana.

⁴⁶ Joseph W. Chapman, long a law-partner of Senator Bright at Madison.

Washington
Dec 27 61

Friend English

I am indebted to you, for letters of the 15th & 23 Inst. I have been in my room for two weeks with painful threats of Rheumatism, but have escaped the real old fashioned attack, and now feel pretty confident, I shall be able to keep about, which is a matter of some moment to me, *at this time*.

Whatever you do with creditors to the Dunham fund will be right. I consider that I am very fortunate in having an honest and as cunning a friend as *I know* you to be, to attend to my business instead of myself.

I send you by to days Mail 3 copies of the Mechanical part of the Pat. Rept. for 1861. Anything I can do for you here let me know, it will be done with all my heart.

I am glad that my Abolition enemies have opened there Battery in the form of a proposition to expel me, you shall say before it [is] over that they have come out in this, as in all there past assaults upon me (Second best)

I am glad that you think of coming on next month.

Your old friends here will be delight[ed] to see you. I have not a word to say about Indiana politicks, because I do not care a damn as between Abolitionists & Douglasites I shall never vote or coalesce with either politically.

My kind regards to your family, Father & family.

Truly yours

J D Bright

P S Try and get an offer for my house and I will tell you what to do B

Washington
Jan 5th 1862

Friend English

Yours of the 28 Inst is received. Exercise your own judgment in reference to notes we hold on Porter, indeed I make the remark general, whatever you do, I *approve*. You are on the ground, know more of the conditions of parties that owe us. Whether produce is likely to command a market, whether money is likely to be had to pay Debts &c &c, I think of going West about the 1 of March and if so will not return without seeing you, unless you come here meantime which I hope you will.

I had a letter from A J Carr, Treasurer of Clark Co. telling me that my Taxes \$145.50 must be paid without delay. I have written to Mr. Sparks to collect the last Installment of rent due me if possible and pay the same—if he does not do it, I am going to draw on you for that amount to be repaid when I come out, or before if you need it

I need not say anything about political affairs as the lying newspapers of the day give you all and more to.

I am anxious to see the Wishwashy Resolutions that I am sure will be proposed at a Convention at which the Douglas Democracy will have the ascendancy, not that I take any interest in there proceedings, but

as one of the signs showing the degeneracy of the times. Glad to hear from you at any time & desiring to be remembered to your Household I am as ever

Yours Truly

J D Bright

P S. I wish on receipt of this you would drop a line to Carr, telling him that you will pay above sum [taxes] for me if Mr. Sparks does not. B

Washington Jan 8/62

Friend English

Yours enclosing Porters letter is recd. do with his notes, as you think best.

I am obliged to you for your expressions of the hope that I will survive the assaults of my Foes, and the more so because I know with you and your honored father, it comes from the *heart*. Fear not, I will prove equal to any occasion, and not falter in the defense of the right here or elsewhere. If you will look at some few incidental remarks I made on the 6th instant, published in the *Congressional Globe* of the 7th, I hope you will come to the conclusion, that I am not *Skeered*⁴⁷

This furor got up against me from the lowest of motives, will fail of its objects

Await results and believe me as ever yours truly

J D Bright

⁴⁷ On January 6, 1862, when the Senate was giving consideration to the eligibility of a certain new member to a seat in the Senate, Charles Sumner included the following in some brief remarks: "The Senate is at this moment engaged in considering the loyalty of certain members of this body, and it seems to me it would poorly do its duty if it admitted among its members one with regard to whom, as he came forward to take his oath, there was a reasonable suspicion." The person whose case was before the Senate was an appointee of the Governor of Oregon, but Bright felt that Sumner had aimed a shaft in his direction as well, which was true. In answer to the gentleman from Massachusetts, Bright made the brief speech mentioned in his letter to English:

"The Senator from Massachusetts remarked that the Senate were now engaged in examining into the loyalty of certain members of this body. I suppose he alluded to me. I am in that category, and the examination is based on three lines that it is alleged I wrote in a letter for a friend of mine, dated as far back as the first day of March last [Before the beginning of the War]. The objectionable feature is that I addressed Jefferson Davis as president of the confederate States. In that I was but following the example of Senators upon this floor who, day after day, spoke and addressed him by that title at that time; yet no exception was taken to that. However I do not propose arguing my case now; it would be out of time and place; but I want it to go out to the world with the statement of the Senator from Massachusetts, that, as far as I am concerned, I hope the Senate are examining into my case, and I am very sorry that they have progressed so slowly. I am impatient for the investigation and anxious for the result, ready to meet it at any time it may come, and the sooner the better. I say this much for the information of the committee who have my case in charge, and for my friends at a distance, who appear to be borrowing some trouble on my account. I do not ask their sympathy. I have done nothing that I would not do over again under the same circumstances, and that I am not prepared to defend here as elsewhere." *Cong. Globe*, 37 Cong., 2 Sess., 184.

The letter which Bright wrote that caused his expulsion from the Senate is added that readers may judge it for themselves:

Washington, March 1, 1861.

My Dear Sir: Allow me to introduce to your acquaintance my friend Thomas Lincoln, of Texas. He visits your capital mainly to dispose of what he regards a great improvement in fire-arms. I recommend him to your favorable consideration, as a gentleman of the first respectability, and reliable in every respect.

Very truly, yours.

Jesse D. Bright.

To His Excellency Jefferson Davis,
President of the Confederation of States.

Jeffersonville
March 22 1862

Friend English

I am truly sorry not to have met you. Were it not that I have engagements of a character I cannot break, without wrong to others, I would go up to Lexington Monday Night. As it is, I must go to Cincinnati on Tuesday and thence to Washington. Have you no business at Cincinnati? Why not come up to Madison Tuesday—meet me on the Mail Boat there, and on the trip to Cincinnati we can talk over matters generally; or why not get ready to go on to Washington with me. *I would like this very much.* I shall return West with my family about the 10 of next month. My kind regards to Mrs. English, your Father & family

Truly Yours
J D Bright

Louisville (Monday)
Nov 9/62

Friend English

I propose remaining here until Thursday 12 o'clock. I am very anxious to see you, and I will in a few words state why. I want to sell out my interests in the Dunham debt because I need the money *now*, and I want you to purchase it. 2nd There is a move or two, to be made on the political boards, that it would require too much time to explain on paper, but if you will come down tomorrow, or next day I will explain it all to you, in person. It is something that will interest you, as much as me, and more you than me, in the end. I hope you will come, enquire for me at Sparks Store, if not there at Major Jarvis Store in this City.

Very Truly Yours
J D Bright

Louisville Nov 22 62

Friend English

The fates seem to decree against my meeting you again. I have written naming two different times and places to be at but presume you did not get my letter in time. On receipt of this *drop me a line* directed to Warsaw Kentucky, saying where you will be next Saturday and Sunday. I shall be at my Farm near there [Warsaw] until Thursday next perhaps Friday. I want to appropriate Saturday & Sunday (if I can so make my engagement to seeing you.)

I have spent the last three days in Jeffersonville.

Your friend
J D Bright

Steamer Anderson

Dec 31 62

Friend English

I am not satisfied with my interview with you yesterday. I have thought the past present & probable future over as connected with you and myself, and I do not intend to take a step that any true friend I have ever had (who is a just and reasonable man) will say is not *right*, *religiously right*. I wish to meet you in the spirit we have ever met from boyhood, and if we break the bond that has so long bound us, in more respects than one, *you* will be the aggressor not *I*. I intend to go to Indianapolis I hope to meet you Saturday and face to face, say what I think is due from you to me under existing circumstances. Until then believe me as ever

Yours Truly

J D Bright

P S. The Boat starts. I have a bad pen and but little light, I do not know whether you can read what I have written.

Baltimore Md

January 27/63

Friend English

On reaching here last evening I found your favor of the 18 Inst. I loose no time in replying, though the limits of an ordinary letter will not allow me to give you even *the heads* of such matters as I would like to amplyfy upon if I were to undertake to say all I want to, on the points presented in yours of above date. I hope we will meet again soon, when I will frankly give you my opinion of matters and things *past present & future*, I did not leave Indianapolis, entertaining an unkind thought toward you *personally*. I claim to be a tolerant politician, and a *true* friend. I believe I am equally generous in the former & bitter in the latter to an enemy.

I attatch no blame *to you* on account of what occurred at Indianapolis, being a Candidate yourself, I could not, *I did not*, expect you to say or do anything that might prejudice your Election. If any true friend of mine opposed you it was not because I encouraged it, *for not a word did I utter "pro or con" about a candidate for any office while there*. I said no *gentleman* or *Democrat* would accept an Election for my unexpired term, *and that I repeat now*, and though I know little or nothing of the fellow that sought the place and got it,⁴⁸ I shall be mistaken if time does not prove him a worthy successor & second edition of Jo Wright.

The miserable Dogs who opposed my restoration,⁴⁹ both in and out of the Legislature were governed by *personal* malice and *envious* considerations, mainly. Some wanting brain to enable themselves to take an elevated view of the principle involved, made committals against me in advance, in order to gratify a rotten class of Douglas Democrats &

⁴⁸ David Turpie was the man elected.

⁴⁹ Bright asked the Indiana Legislature to vindicate him by returning him to the Senate whose members had expelled him.

Abolitionists, who having neither courage or honesty themselves, cannot appreciate such traits of character in others. You know that personally I cared nothing about a reelection to the Senate. The State would have been more honored in the eyes of all just men, than I would have been—I would rather stand upon my record as a Democrat and a man of courage, *opposed to all the damning heresies of such Abolitionists & rotten booring Democrats as now have power than to be in power by there favor.* But enough on those points—you understand me.

So far as I am concerned, I am glad to know from your letter that so far as you are concerned, we stand where we always have (and I hope always will) friends, ready to do battle at the proper time (& that time is not far distant), against a gang of political boors who have reached and obtained the political power of this government by false pretences.

I supposed you were talking about the land being in our trade. Are you in real earnest? My kind regards to all your Household.

As ever Yours Truly J D Bright

I shall go West in 15 or 20 days. Write me mean time as to your views on matters & things generally B