

LETTERS OF ABIJAH BIGELOW, MEMBER
OF CONGRESS, TO HIS WIFE, 1810-1815

ABIJAH BIGELOW was born in Westminster, Massachusetts, December 5, 1775. When ten years of age he entered Leicester Academy, and spent his winters there, studying English and Latin, until the spring of 1791. He was afterwards a pupil in the Academy at New Ipswich, N. H., and graduated from Dartmouth College in 1795 with the degree of A. M. Soon after leaving college he began reading law in the office of the late Samuel Dana, Esq., of Boston, remaining there, with the exception of a brief period, for three years, when he was admitted to the bar of Worcester County, of which he was at the time of his death the oldest member. He soon after commenced practice in the town of Leominster. In March, 1803, he was chosen town clerk of Leominster, and was annually re-elected to that post, until March, 1809, during four years of that time being also one of the selectmen of the town. In 1807, and for two successive years, he was chosen to represent that town in the General Court, when he declined a re-election.

In the fall of 1810 he was elected a member of Congress from the old Worcester North district, to supply the vacancy occasioned by the resignation of William Stedman. These were violent party times, and the district was decidedly Federal, Mr. Bigelow

This account of Abijah Bigelow is compiled from the excellent obituary notice in the *Massachusetts Spy* of April 7, 1860; Caleb A. Wall's "Reminiscences of Worcester", 1877, page 264; an article by Nathaniel Paine in the *Proceedings of the Worcester Society of Antiquity* for 1844, page 138; a genealogy of the Bigelow family and an autobiography, both in manuscript, in the possession of the American Antiquarian Society; and information furnished by a descendant, Mr. Daniel Berkeley Updike of Boston.

receiving 2123 out of the 2945 votes cast. He was also elected to the two succeeding congresses, the last of which ended March 4, 1815, covering the important period of the last war with Great Britain, when such men as Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, John C. Calhoun, William Lowndes, Nathaniel Macon, and Jeremiah Morrow were members of that body. On the 12th of March, 1817, he was appointed clerk of the courts for Worcester County, by the judges of the Supreme Court, then in session at Boston, and continued in this office till his resignation in July, 1833, a period of over sixteen years, discharging its duties, like all his other trusts, with singular fidelity. He then resumed the practice of the law, in Worcester, in company with George Folsom, Esq.

The period of Mr. Bigelow's residence in Worcester dated from 1817, when he assumed the duty of clerk of the courts. He was elected trustee of Leicester Academy, November 11, 1819, and treasurer of that institution, August 23, 1820, both of which offices he resigned May 11, 1853. Mr. Bigelow was commissioned by Governor Gore, June 16, 1809, a justice of the peace, and by Governor Strong, in November, 1812, a justice of the quorum, which commissions he continued to hold by successive re-appointments till his death. He always took a great interest in political questions, and was a frequent contributor to the press on matters concerning the public welfare. He was chairman of the committee of Worcester fellow citizens who addressed Mr. Webster in 1844, to ascertain his views in relation to the annexation of Texas, and which elicited from that statesman a letter on that important subject, stating his opinions at length. An unworldly and deeply religious man, Mr. Bigelow was much interested in moral reforms, and during his long and useful life maintained a reputation of unsullied integrity.

He was a member of the American Antiquarian Society from 1813 until his death. Towards the end

of his life, he devoted his leisure time to horticulture, agriculture and literature. He was the author of "Essays, by Garrulus," Leominster, 1801; "The Voter's Guide," Leominster, 1807; "Oration Delivered at Bolton, July 4, 1808," Leominster, 1808; "Political Queries and Statements, Address to the Candid Men of All Parties" [Leominster, 1810]; "The Sabbath, A Poem," Worcester, 1842. He contributed many political articles to newspapers, notably six numbers of "Political Reflections" in the *Massachusetts Spy* in January and February, 1812, and a series of seven articles on slavery, signed "A Layman," in the Worcester *Palladium* in January and February, 1838. He wrote the History of Leicester Academy, appended to Luther Wrights' "Address before Leicester Academy" Worcester, 1834. He also wrote considerable poetry for newspapers, and some of his poems exist in manuscript in the Society's collection of Bigelow papers.

When Mr. Bigelow came to Worcester, he lived first in a house previously owned and occupied by Rev. Dr. Austin, and afterwards by John W. Hubbard and Samuel H. Colton, near the north corner of Main and Austin Streets. Mr. Bigelow moved next into the old Sheriff Gardner Chandler mansion, afterwards owned and occupied by Judge Barton, that estate about that time being purchased by Deacon Benjamin Butman, Mr. Bigelow having the previous offer of this estate, comprising thirty-one acres of land for the sum of \$9,000, which he thought rather high. After living here a year or two, Mr. Bigelow resided a short time in the mansion owned and occupied for thirty years by Osgood Bradley. Mr. Bigelow then purchased of Captain Azor Phelps the estate on the west corner of Front and Church Streets, comprising about an acre and a half of land, for \$3300. This included the original Daniel Goulding house where Mr. Bigelow lived until his death in 1860, and his four unmarried daughters for some years after. This house was an

interesting old structure, with large rooms, a fine staircase (beneath the landing of which hung the fire-buckets of the Worcester Fire Society) and some good woodwork—the chamber over the parlor to the left of the hall having an elaborate panelled mantel, the upper portion enclosing a painting of a pastoral landscape with figures. The parlour contained a piano (well-known to connoisseurs of musical instruments) made by John Osborne of Milton, Massachusetts, to whom Chickering was apprentice, and said to be the first piano brought to Worcester—in shape like a spinet, with drawers for music and a handsome inlaid case. This instrument later became the property of Elizabeth Bigelow Greene, granddaughter to Mr. Bigelow, who bequeathed it, subject to a life interest, to the Society.

The land on which the house stood extended along Front Street to a small alley, called Bigelow's Court, on the corner of which was a one-story wooden building, such as was often built in New England for lawyers' offices, and which Mr. Bigelow used for this purpose. Between the office and the house were gardens which ran back to Mechanic Street, for flowers, fruit and vegetables. In front of the house stood two or three great elms. The house and land were finally sold to the Worcester City Hospital and the property is now covered by business blocks. A charming little sketch of the old place was written by Elisabeth Bigelow Updike, and was privately printed under the title, "In the Old Days."

Abijah Bigelow was the son of Elisha Bigelow of Westminster (born January 11, 1728, died February 1, 1814) and Sarah Goodridge of Lunenburg (born January 1, 1731, died May 10, 1807). He married Hannah, daughter of Rev. Francis Gardner (Harvard University, 1755), April 8, 1804, and granddaughter of Rev. John Gardner (Harvard University, 1715), pastor of Stow. They had ten children:

- Sarah, born 1805, married Seth Adams of Providence, died 1886
Francis Elisha, born 1807, married late in life Elizabeth C. Larrabee, died 1880
Susan, born 1809, married Dr. Charles G. Greene, of Windsor, Vermont, died 1883
Caroline, born 1810, died in infancy
Hannah, born 1812, died July 7, 1874
Abijah, born 1814, died 1817
Lucinda, born 1815, died 1875
Elizabeth, born 1817, died 1838
Anne, born 1819, died 1875
Mary, born 1821, died 1872

Mrs. Bigelow was a sprightly woman of great charm and vivacity, who danced at her own golden wedding. Her sister Sarah became the wife of Samuel Salisbury of Boston, and an amusing series of letters from Sarah and Susan Bigelow, when visiting their Boston relatives, is still extant. A word should be said of Anne and Mary Bigelow, whose gifts of mind and cultivated tastes made them well-known figures in the musical and intellectual society of Worcester.

A portrait of Mr. Bigelow, painted by James S. Lincoln, a Providence portrait painter, hangs in the Library of the Society, the gift of his great-grandson, Mr. Daniel Berkeley Updike. It was one of three similar portraits painted at the same time, the other two being of Mrs. Bigelow and her daughter, then Mrs. Adams.

The following letters written by Abijah Bigelow cover his career in Congress from December 1810 to February 1815. They were all written to his wife, Hannah Bigelow, then residing at Leominster, Mass. Generally he wrote two letters a week and the collection as a whole contains interesting commentaries upon affairs in Congress. The contents of each letter, however, chiefly refer to family matters, either to concern for his wife's health or instructions for the up-

bringing of his children. These family references were often very lengthy and invariably uninteresting except to the recipient. Therefore, these are omitted in printing and only those portions of his letters which refer to events in Congress are printed. It is also true that many of his accounts of Congressional happenings are not particularly important. He was one of the leading members of the House from New England and in a position to be an excellent commentator, but he assumed that his wife was not interested in political matters, in fact, he often apologized for writing so much politics in his letters. Two of the letters, however, one of October 2, 1814, referring to the result of the burning of Washington, and the other, of October 27, 1814, graphically describing a Washington horse race, are highly interesting and contain material presumably nowhere else preserved. In reading these letters it should be remembered that Abijah Bigelow was an intense Federalist and could see no good whatever in Madison's party or in the War which was being waged. His opinion, although violently colored, was, however, the opinion of practically all the Federalists of his day.

Since all the letters are written to his wife and all are signed by him, the headings and signatures are omitted in printing. Although the date line is generally Washington, a few letters are from New York or Baltimore, written during his journeys to or from Washington. There are few footnotes inserted, as practically all of the Members of Congress can be identified easily.

The collection of Bigelow letters and manuscripts was acquired for the Society through the kindness of a member of the Council, Mr. Chandler Bullock, and three great-grandchildren of Mr. Bigelow, Miss H. Frances Henshaw, Mrs. Sarah Bigelow Parker, and Daniel Berkeley Updike.

C. S. B.

WASHINGTON CITY, Dec. 15, 1810

I arrived at this place on Thursday evening, since which time I have been occupied in making arrangements as to lodgings, &c. I took my seat in the house yesterday and was qualified. I have taken lodgings at a Mrs. Hamilton's, in company with Col. Pickering of the Senate, Mr. Allen, Mr. Chamberlain of New Hampshire and Mr. Hubbard of Vermont. Mr. Allen and myself have taken a chamber together, with each a bed, and our board and lodging per week is ten dollars, including fire wood & candles. If we had taken separate chambers, we must have given twelve dollars, and I find Mr. Allen very agreeable and think myself well situated, about forty rods from the Capitol. I saw Mr. Prentiss yesterday in the house, he is well and appeared to be in good spirits. The letter I wrote you from Philadelphia you will probably have received this day, and I am very anxious to hear from you and the children, and the family.

Congress do not meet this day, and I calculate to go with Mr. Allen to Georgetown to get some few things which we need in our room. After I can get a little more settled, I shall write you more at large. You may inform your Father and Brother that I intend constantly to send one *National Intelligencer*, with one condition, that after reading them, they shall be returned to you, and preserved as I shall wish to keep them all.

WASHINGTON CITY, Dec. 23, 1810

I am well situated as to convenience in attending Congress, and my fellow boarders, Col. Pickering, Mr. Allen, Mr. Hubbard and Mr. Chamberlain are very agreeable and regular men. In the next door of the same building are a number of the Connecticut delegation, very fine worthy men. Mr. Frost has moved from the house he lived in last winter, to the same building where I board, but was full before I arrived.

The house will meet tomorrow, but adjourn over Christmas. There is not as yet much business done. I find the federal members very agreeable men, and also some of the other party. There is, however, a difference, but many of the members stiled democrats, like many Merino sheep, are some two thirds and others not more than half blooded and often vote with us.

WASHINGTON CITY, Dec. 29, 1810

Congress will rise, much to my satisfaction, on the fourth of March, and I shall then make the best of my way home, probably by water a great part of the way, as the roads at that season are excessively bad. I believe I have not informed you, how bad the roads were, from New York to this place. Altho' from New York to Philadelphia, and a great part of the way from Philadelphia to Baltimore, they have a turnpike, yet at this season, the ruts are so deep, that the wheels were frequently in to the hub, and I had I assure you a counfounded jolting, but arrived safe, with all my things.

You caution me against cards and billiards, and observe that I am more fond of them than I ought to be—Your advice is good, and your rebuke just, and I trust you will never again have occasion to caution me upon the subject. Since I left Worcester I have not seen a pack of cards, billiards I know nothing about. I am in good company. Col. Pickering, is a very sociable man, of rather blunt manners, but of incorruptible integrity, and a perfect hater of democratic fraud and villainy, of which there is enough. Mr. Allen is a very good sort of man, and upon the whole an agreeable companion. I live in a chamber with him very happily. Mr. Hubbard and Chamberlain are sensible agreeable men, and very steady. I rise about sunrise, and the sun rises earlier here, than at Leominster, and if the weather is pleasant, walk half a mile or more, sometimes alone, and sometimes with one of the mess, for so the boarders at a particular house, are denominated. I breakfast between 8 and 9, go to the house, read newspapers, documents &c., send off Newspapers and attend to the business of the day, altho' very little of importance has been brought before the house as yet, dine at three, sup at 7, retire to my chamber and read, or write till ten and after.

On Wednesday last I went to Mrs. Madison's levee, which she has every week, on that evening. There is a curious collection of beings to be seen, Federalists and Democrats, females married and unmarried, handsome and ugly, red coats and black, Frenchmen and Russians and so on. It is customary for all the members to attend this levee once or twice during the session. Once more will suffice for me. I will now

endeavor to give you a description of the proceedings at this levee. In the first place we go in to a large room where there is a band of music playing. Here we take off our hats and outside garments, and then proceed to the levee room, where we must first make our bow to Mrs. Madison and then the President, and then mix with the company as we please. Wine and Punch, neither very good, is carried round, and ice creams, which I did not taste of, and which those who did said were poor. There I saw that infamous scoundrel Turreau, the French Minister, with a coat almost covered with lace, also Monsieur Gallatin, whose countenance is some like a Hopkintian preacher, but marked with more intelligence, indeed, I apprehend, he is by far the wisest man in the cabinet and probably superior to Madison. I was much disappointed in the appearance of the President. He is a short man, his forehead full of wrinkles, a face which has the appearance of the midnight lamp, and a countenance, by no means indicating that firmness and wisdom which I expected. Mrs. Madison is a large, stately woman, not handsome, but decent, and her cheeks red, undoubtedly with paint. So much for this levee.

We have preaching on Sundays in the Representatives' chamber, but not very good. I will give you a specimen of his reasoning. The man, says he, who dates his letter in the year of our Lord 1810, thereby acknowledges his belief in the Christian religion, and if I were an unbeliever, said he, I would not be so inconsistent as to date my letters in that way.

Now as to my living. We have adopted some New England fashions. Col. Pickering has learnt our landlady how to make indian pudding, and we now have very good ones, we have also bought two barrels of cyder of the members from Rhode Island which they had transported by water, and for which we give three dollars a barrel, and it will save us more than that in spirit and wine, of which we use but little, not any except with dinner.

WASHINGTON CITY, Jan'y 9, 1811

We have had several days secret sessions and tedious things they are for they keep us until nearly night without dinner, which does not very well suit me, however, I may get accustomed to it.

Mr. Prentiss is every day in the house, when the session is not secret, not so much for the purpose of taking the debates, as of giving an account of the proceedings, and ridiculing what is ridiculous, of which there is enough, and if there was nothing more, it would be better than it is. Mr. Prentiss says he has thirty dollars a week for what he writes, if so he may earn something, as he gives but eight for his board.

WASHINGTON, Jan'y 13, 1811

You will feel interested to know how I live and what I am doing here. I must then begin by informing you, that for about a week past Congress have been in secret session, and have held them till four or five o'clock in the afternoon, and last night until nine o'clock. I don't like these deeds of darkness, but I desire to thank God I can wash my hands clean, and that I did, or at least endeavor to do my duty, by voting as well as speaking. I fear this Country must experience a very serious turn of affairs, and I think it high time to rescue it from the hands of bad, unprincipled men.

Considering the different mode of living, the unseasonable hour at which we dine, the difference of climate, and the separation from you and the children, to me so near and dear, I enjoy as good health as I could expect. I am much pleased with Col. Pickering, he is an intelligent, well informed upright man, and a great thorn to the administration.

WASHINGTON CITY, Jan'y 20, 1811

There is a great sameness attached to this place, and a new day is but a repetition of the same sort of work with the preceding. We get up in the morning and wash, &c., eat breakfast about nine, dine at four and drink a cup of tea about seven, and this course we follow the week round. One thing vexes me much. The weather is seldom fair, and the streets intolerably muddy, so that I have but little chance for exercise, which is necessary. This day we had a much better preacher than I mentioned in a former letter. He gave us a very good discourse upon the evidences of the truth of Christianity, and the importance of the Christian religion.

I find enough to employ my mind, the public documents, reports, &c., which are every morning laid on our desks, are as

much as we can conveniently read and understand, besides Congress have a good library, and I have constantly had out a book. I have rec'd since I have been here much information from Col. Pickering. He has been so long in public life, that he knows the whole history of the public transactions for many years past.

Jan'y 21, 1811

This morning makes thirty-seven days since my arrival at this place, and forty-one more will complete the session. Nothing new has occurred here. In the house we have some very good and some very poor speeches, however, measures are carried so much by parties, that the best speech in the world avails but little with the demo's. I dined last week at the President's, we had a very good dinner, and very good company, as they were chiefly Federalists, about twenty in number; a piece of your boiled beef and pork with some squash and potatoes, if I could have been at home to eat it, would have been much more agreeable.

WASHINGTON, Jan'y 24, 1811

Congress sits so long, from eleven to four, five & six o'clock, I don't find much time this week for any thing but attending there. The renewal of the Bank Charter excites much interest. Mr. Gardiner made a very able and ingenious speech yesterday. Mr. Randolph it is expected will speak to-day. They have both but just taken their seats. I enclose you a paper containing Jack Rattle's account of Congress. It may afford you more amusement than anything I can say about them.

WASHINGTON CITY, Jan'y 31, 1811

I have nothing new, except politics, which to you would not be very interesting to write you. I will mention, however, as your father and brother might wish to know it, that it appears by a letter from France, official, and which was this day communicated to the house by the President, that the Emperor still seizes our vessels, and that the Berlin and Milan Decrees are not repealed. This must place the President and his proclamation in a sad dilemma. There were many sad countenances among the demo's when the documents were read to-day; when they are printed I shall send them on.

WASHINGTON CITY, February 4, 1811

I should have written you yesterday, but was engaged, all day, except while at meeting, in writing a piece for the public, which I hope will be a sufficient excuse for my not writing until to-day. I have nothing new, that is interesting to write. I enjoy my health very well, and lead a regular life, and am industrious, employing my time in reading & writing, which is always my favorite pursuit. We had a very good sermon yesterday, from Mr. Addison, the minister of Georgetown. His text was, Let your light so shine in the world, that others seeing your good example, may glorify your father which is in heaven. He inculcated the importance of setting good examples in a very able manner, he is a fine man, preacher, not for the pay he receives, for he has a handsome fortune, but from the love of doing good.

WASHINGTON CITY, Feb'y 10, 1811

I amuse myself very well with the books which I get from the library, when not attending Congress. One thing I have learnt from the practise here, which is, not to dine till four and often five oclock, which I should not have expected I could have done. The most fatiguing thing is to hear some of the democrats make long speeches, tho' we frequently avoid this, by leaving the hall and walking about in the other parts of the building.

The famous boy Zerah Colburn is here. I have heard him answer to several questions, and it is truly astonishing how he does. He was asked how much 148,493 would make multiplied by 19 which he readily told and quicker than a man could do it on a slate. Any questions of a similar nature he will answer very readily. He is about six years old, red hair and a hearty, rugged looking boy, very prompt as well as saucy, and will probably be ruined if carried about by his father to be exhibited for money.

I have no news, in particular to write, other than what you see in the papers. Lincoln has declined accepting the appointment as Judge of the Supreme Court, and everybody here agree the President has nominated a much worse man, as well as one not so well qualified. Alexander Wolcott, of Connecti-

cut is the man, it makes much noise and disturbance even among the democrats, and it is doubtful whether the Senate confirm the nomination. Some attribute the nomination to Joel Barlow, others to the influence of Mrs. Madison, observing that Wolcott being a handsome & gallant man, she is pleased with him.

NEW YORK CITY, October 27, 1811

I arrived in this City about four O'Clock this morning and having slept and refreshed myself, been to Church and dined, I set down to give you some account of myself and journey thus far. When I arrived at Worcester, I found that one stage was going on in 15 minutes to travel all night, and that another would start the next morning, accordingly I tarried over night, drank tea and spent the evening with Mr. Allen, just called at Mrs. Stearns'. Friday morning started about six A.M. and arrived at Hartford about six P. M. It rained very hard, but the carriage was tight, had but one passenger any of the way, and did not get much wet or take cold. The next morning started from Hartford and arrived at New Haven about one A. M. distance 42 miles. There I found Varnum, and Cutts of New Hampshire and they were going on to New York that night 75 miles, the wind was unfavorable for a packet, and I concluded to go on with them. The evening was very clear and pleasant, tho' it snowed in the morning, and I arrived here about 4 O. C. this morning, put in to Gibson's Hotel, slept till about 8 O. C., changed my linen, and at breakfast found Judge Brigham at table, altho' he started two days before me, and after breakfast we went together to Church.

WASHINGTON CITY, November 4, 1811

I arrived in this place on Friday evening last, since which time I have had no opportunity to write you, having been engaged in making arrangements for winter quarters, which I have effected, and with a good mess, to wit, Champion, Moseley, Sturges and Law of Connecticut, Chittenden of Vermont, Doc^t Fitch of New York and Brigham and Ely of Massachusetts. I room with Mr. Brigham, our landlord's name is Birch, about seventy rods south of the Capitol.

We have been engaged this day in choosing a Speaker.

Henry Clay of Kentucky had 75 votes, other candidates 44. To-morrow at 12 O. C. we are to have the President's Message. My journey from New York where I last wrote you was pleasant, the travelling much better than last December.

WASHINGTON CITY, Nov. 28, 1811

I went last evening, for the first time to the levee. There was a great collection of all sorts and descriptions. Our mess all went, and we all concluded that once was enough for the session. There were many females as well as males, two hundred at least in all, and among the rest Mrs. Jerome Bonaparte. She is a small woman, but seemed to be very free and sociable with those with whom she was acquainted and appeared to excite as much attention as Mrs. Madison, I thought rather more. However these levees are a sort of bustle and confusion, and the only useful purpose they answer is to gratify curiosity, and to see what sort of folks those we are accustomed to think wise and great really are. The nearer we approach them, with a few exceptions, the less we respect them.

We have nothing new or interesting here as yet. We expect soon a report from the Committee of foreign relations, and we some expect they will report a declaration of war, you must not be alarmed at this, and tell your friends, not to mind it, should it happen. It will end in smoke, and we begin to think do good. I saw in the last *Spy* some remarks of mine on this subject. While here I mean to employ my time as usefully as I can. I have spent no time as yet foolishly, and trust I shall not. It is a critical period for the nation.

WASHINGTON CITY, November 5, 1811

It is now nearly time for me to go to the house and hear the President's message, you will therefore excuse me now from writing a long letter. I delivered Mr. Prentiss his bundle, he is now well, but tells me he has been sick. Every body and thing here is seeking for Office. The late Sergeant at arms of the Senate is dead, and there are about an hundred applicants from Major Generals down to Dickson the barber.

WASHINGTON CITY, November 9, 1811

I have had so many little things to see to in fixing my chambers, and getting settled down that I have not had much time

to write. Thursday, as is customary, I went and made my bow to his majesty the President in company with Mr. Sturges and Mr. Emott. I have not yet received a letter from you but expect one by this days mail.

WASHINGTON CITY, Nov. 17, 1811

I have nothing new to write, that is important. My fellow boarders are all steady, civil, agreeable men, and we live very happily together. Mr. Foster the British Minister called upon us this afternoon, and tarried a short time. He is a young, well looking man. I have just learnt, from the crazy proclamation of Governor Gerry, that your thanksgiving is this week.

WASHINGTON CITY, December 5, 1811

It is time for me to go to the house, especially as the business is important, that of fixing the ratio of representation, 37.000 was fixed by the house, the Senate have nonconcurrred and propose 35.000, the latter has been my number, I mean it shall prevail.

WASHINGTON CITY, Dec. 11, 1811

I have nothing new to write, except the old story of war, and rumors of war. By the speeches of many of the members you would suppose that the enemy were already at our heels, but alas, we federalists are so heedless that we pay no attention to it, but rather urge them on, upon the same principle that while the Captain of a vessel tried to prevent two of his sailors from fighting, they were very resolute, and crying out, let me fight him, d—n him, only let me fight him, I'll give it to him, &c., &c. The Captain, at last, determined to hear no more of their noise, ordered a ring and told them to fight. Their rage soon cooled, and they were ready to settle, they had no longer any disposition for fighting. We apprehend it is much so with these demo's, it is a war of words, in which, as no one receives any injury, all can be very generous and bold, but, in a war of bullets, we apprehend their courage would be a little cooled.

Mr. Randolph, to be sure, lashes them very severely. He expressed some surprise that they should be so earnest to follow an ex-member into Canada, meaning Bidwell, for strange as it may seem, some have talked so earnestly about taking Canada, that if you were to hear, and not know them,

you would expect they would have Quebec before night. Against these speeches I have inclosed a little of Randolph's severity.

As it will afford you some amusement and may be gratifying to your father & friends, I will give you a little sketch of some of Randolph's remarks, which I do from memory.

After going fully into the subject of war with England and shewing its impropriety he observed, For these sentiments he should be called an Englishman, for the same reason that in 1798 he was called a Frenchman. He said he did not doubt that the Ex-President Adams, and his able coadjutor Porcupine, if he could break jail, would unite with modern Republicans in denouncing him as a British Partisan, under British influence. He had, he said, made it the invariable practise of his life, when danger threatened either his character or his person, to face it. He should not shrink from it now. He expressed surprise that our partialities were still in favor of the French Emperor, that we followed him in his march to universal domination, that we had no sympathies for the suffering Spaniards, but that all our hatred was directed against England. With the great Autocrat of all the Russias (referring to President's Message) we are on the best terms of friendship, we had treated with the Algerines and Indians, but with England, the only nation on earth, except our own, having any pretensions to freedom, we must rashly plunge into a war. Whence all this bitter hatred against England? Is it because their blood flows in our Veins? In what school, I pray you, said he, were your Washingtons, your Hancocks, your Henrys, and your other heroes and sages educated? Whence do you derive your most valuable institutions, your trial by Jury, your Habeas Corpus &c.?

He acknowledge himself indebted to their Shakespeare and Milton for their effect upon his imagination, to Locke in his understanding, to Tillotson, Sherlock and Porteus on his religion, and for his political qualities to their Chatham, and he wished to God they bore any comparison to that eminent Statesman.

He allowed much to the just and honest prejudice growing out of the revolution. But, said he, it ought to be remembered

that the heart of the English nation was with us. He said it was the selfish and corrupt ministry, and their servile tools, who caused the revolution, and he expressed a hope that a corrupt administration here, which will always find tools servile enough for any thing, might not drive us into as wicked measures.

He animadverted with severity upon the practise of foreigners, who have fled from crimes and from jails to this country, undertaking to instruct us in politics, and in charging the real Americans, those who fought the battles of the revolution, with being partisans of Britain. It is insufferable that these imported patriots, these runaways from jails and the gallows, should be allowed to charge Americans who were active in 1775 in their country's cause, with being British partisans, it ought not to be borne, it ought to be put down; in this house it ought to meet with a severe rebuke, and ought of it [sic] with the lie direct. He expressed his astonishment at the influence of these foreigners upon our politics, and particularly, that fathers of families should consent, not only to have their children, but submit to be themselves taught in their schools. Ask, said he, these self stiled republicans where they were in 1775, and you shut their mouths in silence, &c.

WASHINGTON CITY, Dec. 14, 1811

You say I have not written any news. I have had little to write. It is the old story. We meet every day, except Saturdays and Sundays, and as to the speeches they are all bark and no bite. Much is said about taking Canada. I attended in the Senate to-day, for they meet Saturdays, to hear the debates. Gen^l. Smith, Baltimore, proposed the Senate should meet tomorrow, Sunday, to pass a bill for raising troops, for said he, I have written to my friends that we shall have war, but I can't make them believe it. I hope, said he, the Senate will meet on Sunday to make them think we are in earnest. I heard Giles say he was not afraid of standing armies, in this Country, he said, standing armies could not prove dangerous in this country. In 1798 I recollected he held a different opinion, and of course I put him down for a time serving politician.

WASHINGTON CITY, Dec. 18, 1811

We have no news of importance, the same routine of business in Congress, the same blustering against Great Britain, the same talk about war, and at the close they will rise with doing as little good and as much mischief as usual. While here, and becoming acquainted with men whom I once thought great, I often think of what a parent said to his son, whom he had educated for public life, and who expressed to his father a diffidence of his abilities to appear as a public man, the father replied, You know not my son with how little wisdom the world is governed. The remark would apply admirable well to our present government and leading men.

WASHINGTON CITY, Dec. 25, 1811

Gouverneur Morris dined with us yesterday. He is a great man, both in body and mind. Very sociable, a quality you are very sensible I do not possess much of. This I attribute in some measure to my early education, not that I complain of any inattention on the part of my parents, for they did enough for me, but to my situation, not being in that sort of company, where easy and graceful manners were prevalent.

Among other things, Mr. Morris mentioned, that the best mode of making fires, was to put on a large back log in the morning, cover it up entirely with ashes, then another on that, that this log would be all a live coal the next morning. He said he had prevailed upon his wife, by being very pleasant and good natured, to let him try it, that now these coals warm the room every morning so quick, that she always gets up in good humour.

It is said that Mr. Madison begins to tremble for his next election. Morris & DeWitt Clinton are here to solicit the aid of Congress in making a Canal in New York. Many, however, suspect that his views, Clinton's, are more bent upon another object, and it is said the Queen at the palace was heard to ask, what that fellow wanted here. These are things not to be spoken of publicly.

WASHINGTON CITY, Jan'y 1st, 1812

I suppose the people talk much about war, and what Congress are doing. I wish they could come here and see how they

proceed, and I think they would not be much frightened about immediate war. Indeed as the federalists have declined taking any part whatever in the debate about raising an army, the democrats begin to falter, they begin to reflect a little, and several of them have already spoke against it. Some of them tell their party, if they make war, they will not make peace. Other men will take their places. But the great difficulty is raising taxes. They dare not do it. They are too cunning to risk their popularity by a land tax, loans, &c., when they raise the taxes necessary to carry on a war I shall think them in earnest, not before.

I sent your brother a paper containing an account of the dreadful fire at Richmond. I cannot but sometimes think how careful you ought to be, as I have no doubt you are, about fire. General Moreau has had his house burnt in New Jersey. You have probably heard of the shock of an Earthquake in several places. It was felt very sensibly here. I perceived it in the house where I lodge and was the first who mentioned it. I hope these things are not ominous of national calamity. I much fear however we shall have it before many years. I know no better way than for every one to do his duty, to act honestly and meet with firmness whatever may come.

WASHINGTON CITY, Jan'y 5, 1812

There is nothing new to relate. The proceedings of Congress are slow, dull, foolish and you may add wicked, or any such word, without fear of being wrong. The measures originate in party views, but may end in something serious at last. I hope the total silence of the federalists will speak a language which arguments could not, a contempt of their desperate measures, of their noisy, declamatory and foolish speeches, and that the people instead of calling us British partizans will reflect seriously upon what the democrats are about.

Yesterday several read speeches which would have done no honor to a Sophomore at College, others spoke nonsense without notes, even the more sensible part of the democrats are disgusted with many of their own speakers. About 5 o'Clock Mr. Stanford, who was formerly a democrat rose, and began

to trim them for their inconsistency, for being willing to go to war with England when they were formerly unwilling to go to war with France altho' we had much more cause then, than we have now. He said at that time one of the Directory asked an American, if France should send an army into this country, whether the democrats would not join it, and that he could prove it. Mr. Sheffey of Virginia, who is also a republican, but an honest man, on Friday made a very able speech against raising an army, one which the whole host cannot answer. This I expect will be published and I shall forward it. As the federalists are silent, and Randolph and Sheffey, their ablest men oppose their measures, I hope the people will e'er long see their nakedness, their want of talent, of consistency & everything else that good statesmen ought to possess. There are some exceptions among them as to want of talent, but in the house they are few. I expect tomorrow will be spent much as was yesterday.

I attended meeting to-day. We had an excellent sermon from Mr. Breckenridge, in which he spoke of the Richmond fire and intimated that the comet, the indian battle, the shock of Earthquakes were warnings to the nation, that the almighty had even caused the alarm bells to be rung, alluding to the earth quake in several places causing the bells to ring. Perhaps this was going too far, as they may be considered only the ordinary operations of nature. They are however worthy of notice.

WASHINGTON CITY, Jan'y 12, 1812

As the minister, Mr. Sneethen, who is to preach in the Capitol to-day is not much to my liking, I preferred staying at my room, where I have read a long sermon upon the internal evidence contained in the bible itself of the truth of the Christian religion. My time has been better spent than to have gone to church, saving example, and that here is very little regarded, except bad ones. As to myself I am with a mess which offers no temptations to any of the prevalent vices of the place, a circumstance which I by no means regret, because avoiding temptations is one, and perhaps the surest way of avoiding vices.

WASHINGTON, Jan'y 16, 1812

I intended to have written you yesterday, but was engaged in the house until rather late, and in the evening in writing from the notes taken by Mr. Prentiss a short speech which I made. You will therefore excuse it, if this should not reach you until next Saturday week. I have nothing new of importance to write. The house have been engaged upon a bill for raising 50,000 Volunteers. They progress very slow, as well might be expected from the men who do the principal business. I have received an invitation to attend a large evening party at the British Minister's, consisting of most of the members. I have not made up my mind to go, if my mess generally attend, probably shall.

WASHINGTON CITY, Jan'y 24, 1812

I will first give you some information as it respects myself. I read considerable, write a good deal, attend the house every day, when they meet, and twice a week the Committee of public lands. Yesterday I made a speech about an hour long against the loan bill, as I told you I intended, and I can only say succeeded as well as I expected. I will give you some of the concluding remarks. After speaking of the sufferings of the revolutionary army, from not receiving their pay and clothing &c. and mentioning their memorials to Congress on the subject, I alluded to an anonymous address, said to be written by Armstrong, now Secretary of War, advising the army to turn their arms against the government. An address, I observed, written, if fame does not belie him, by the very man, who is to have the direction of your war operations. A flame was kindled which nothing but the commanding influence of Washington, aided by his general Officers could have extinguished. Let us learn wisdom by experience. If you will have an army, for heaven's sake make early and effectual provision for their pay and subsistence.

Depend not upon loans. Expose not again the liberties of your country. At the head of your Army you will not have a Washington, you will not have soldiers actuated by the same motives of patriotism, you will not have the same apology for not paying them. They will not be paid. They will commence with complaints, they will load your table with peti-

tions, which, tho' just, you will not have it in your power to grant, they will take justice into their own hands, and under the direction of some popular leader, after scenes of horror devastation and blood, they will convert your government into a military despotism. I am aware, it will be said, it is intended to provide a system of revenue, which will be permanent and productive. I have no doubt of the intention, but do and must doubt the execution. With this intention, as we were then informed, a system was reported at the last session. Why was it not then acted upon? Why has it not been acted upon at this? These, Sir, are reasons which it is not for me to answer. The public must and will judge for themselves. Thus much I may say, that the reasons which have hitherto operated against it will not only continue to operate, but will increase by delay.

I then observed that to this war I had been always opposed, that the responsibility for its faithful prosecution & successful termination rested not on me, that I was however equally interested in the event with those who made it, &c. & some other things, and concluded my speech by saying—

We have received from our fathers a rich and valuable inheritance, and it is our duty to transmit it to our children as valuable at least as we received it. Let us not incumber it with a mortgage of ours, which it will not be in their power to redeem.

WASHINGTON, Jan'y 25, 1812

I suppose Father Gardner and the good folks round you begin to think about War again, but we federalists don't mind much about [it] here. We feel rather disposed to laugh at their folly & madness and let them go on. We do not yet believe they have the spirit or courage to go to war, and we consider Gallatin's recommendation of land taxes, stamps &c. as intended to check it. This is a strange sort of world and the affairs of this nation are strangely managed. Madison may be re-elected, but I am confident if Congress were appointed as Electors he would not have a majority of votes. I doubt whether he would even among the democrats. Giles, Smith & many others are open enemies to him, and I wish I was convinced that they were better men than I am afraid they are.

In point of honesty I fear there is not much to choose between them, but this may be truly said that Giles has exposed the folly and weakness of the administration in a most admirable manner.

All last week was spent in the house in debating about a Navy, and more talents have been displayed than usual. Some of the Speeches were very able. Quincy is acknowledged by all parties to have made a most able and excellent Speech, and has given no offense. Indeed we have this session pursued a new course, and I think a wise one, and I am not without hopes that its effects will prove it. I have seen the Speech of Gov. Gerry and a queer thing it is. The man must be mad, and the people if they re-elect him, more so, they cannot, they will not suffer Massachusetts to be so degraded.

WASHINGTON CITY, Feb'y 2, 1812

I think myself that I improve my time pretty well here, but perhaps you would like other evidence of it better than my own, so I send you an account of a resolution I offered which made some bustle, but was adopted, and I had the honor to present it to the President.

I have just received yours of the 26th Jan'y and feel very sorry that I cannot inform you how soon Congress will adjourn, but if they should not in the course of a month or six weeks I think I shall ask leave of absence and if you think best I will sooner. It is an important time now as it respects our public affairs, otherwise I would not stay a day longer, but I consider that my obligations to my family are greater than those to my country, and if you think I had better return home before Congress adjourn I certainly will.

WASHINGTON CITY, Feb. 5th, 1812

Congress have been talking about a recess in March for two months, but I am afraid it is all talk, I have however some thought if they do not adjourn of asking leave of absence, as I shall feel very unwilling to stay here till May. The only objection to my doing it would be, that my constituents might think I deserted my duty at a critical period, but I consider that I am more bound to consult the interests and happiness of my family, than that of my country, that is to say, that I am

first to provide for and consult their good, and then that of my country, and indeed they are closely connected, for if the country goes to ruin we might be ruined with it. However I think there is some prospect that our national affairs will take a different turn and for the better, at any rate it is not best to anticipate too soon.

WASHINGTON, Feby 8th, 1812

Nothing very important has occurred, we have been considerably gratified in voting down a bill for dividing the militia into three classes. I made a short speech of half an hour against the bill, and when printed, will send it to you.

Last night one of the members, who had been sick for a number of days, Mr. Blount, died. He was a man considerably advanced in life, and was a member of Congress many years since, but had not for several years been a member till this Congress. I had very little acquaintance with him, but understand that he died of a fever. He was from North Carolina.

We have felt several shocks of Earthquakes in this place. Yesterday morning about 4 O'C. a pretty smart shock was felt by a great many in different parts of the city. I was in bed, but awake, and the house, as well as bed, rocked considerably, as much I should think as four or five inches. These things have never been felt here before, and the cause of them is not known.

WASHINGTON CITY, Feb'y 9th, 1812

We have been trying several of us to have an adjournment in March, all seem to wish to return home, but the administration are in such a hobble that they are afraid to let the members return until something more is done, at least such is our conjecture. What they will do the Lord only knows, but if they can get out of their present difficulties, unless Great Britain repeals her orders in council, without disgrace, they are wiser heads than I think them. They can't well make war without taxes, and those would be unpopular, they can't continue as they are without having the people discontented. They have foolishly and I fear wickedly got themselves into the scrape,

and they now depend upon some favorable occurrence to help them out.

Feby 11, 1812. Yesterday I went into Court, as the Supreme Court is now sitting here, and heard Mr. Dallas of Philadelphia about an hour. All the Judges, except Chief Justice Marshall, who was detained by an injury from upsetting his carriage, were present.

The house as usual did little of importance yesterday, but while away the time. Sometimes they spend a fortnight or three weeks in debating upon a bill and then reject it, so that it costs the United States from 10 to 20 thousand dollars for nothing. If we keep on this way we shall not rise before May. However, I conclude the great difficulty about adjourning now is, that the majority are afraid to have us go home in the present state of things, a war threatened, and to many what is more dreadful, heavy taxes are talked of. They wish to keep us here therefore until the hornet returns from England, hoping she will bring back some modification of the orders in council which will let them off.

WASHINGTON, Feb'y 17, 1812

Last week I attended the Supreme Court several times and heard Luther Martin, Mr. Harper, Mr. Lee & Mr. Pinkney the new attorney general. Every one condemns his manner of speaking altho' he argues his cause very well. He has a squealing voice, and labors very hard with his fists as tho' he meant to beat his arguments into the Court at all hazards.

Congress did nothing last week of any importance. This day we expect a report from the Committee of Ways & Means. You may tell your brother that one of their propositions will be a heavy tax on retailers, and if adopted, he will have to pay fifty or sixty dollars or more, for such articles as he usually retails. Mr. Cummings will have to pay twenty-five dollars as an Innholder, these with a land and house tax will run up well. For a chaise we shall have to pay five dollars. Such will be the blessings of democracy, if they dare go on and lay these taxes, but I understand they are not to be put on and collected unless we have actual war, and I suppose war may be declared upon condition that we get the taxes.

WASHINGTON CITY, Feb'y 25, 1812

I have a ticket in the 3d. Class of Union College Lottery, No. 31,786. One quarter belongs to Charles, another quarter to Caleb for which Mr. Prentiss has paid me, the other half is Francis's.

For Sarah and Susan I have another ticket in same Lottery No. 31,787. I believe I shall keep one half myself, they shall each have a quarter. As you don't like Lotteries I think I shall keep the other half myself, and give you something else. This draws in April. I did not get one in Washington as they are \$20.00. Mine in Washington Lottery is in wheel.

WASHINGTON CITY, March 3, 1812

We are still debating, I mean the democrats, for the federalists are silent, upon the subject of taxes. It is curious to see with that reluctance they are brought up to their work. They want war, many of them, but are afraid that taxing the people to carry it on, will render them unpopular, and that with many is a serious consideration.

I send you a paper containing a speech of mine which I wish preserved as I have no other which contains it.

WASHINGTON CITY, March 11, 1812

I will now give you a short account of an extraordinary Message which was communicated by the President to Congress on Monday this week, and which will probably appear in the papers before this reaches you. The Message relates to an attempt in 1809 of the Governor of Canada to aid the federalists in serving the Union, if they should wish for the assistance of England. The Agent employed was one Henry, an Irishman by birth, but who had been in this country and was one of John Adams' Officers in 1798. It seems he undertook the service, but it does not appear that he ever proposed the thing to anyone, but wrote to the Governor of Canada of what was going on there and of the views of the different parties. His pretense for becoming a traitor, and communicating this information to our government is, that the British would not pay him. I will now state a few facts which we have since ascertained, for we considered it as a trick to influence the election in Massachusetts, and on enquiry are fully convinced of

it. This Henry came from Europe in a vessel with a Frenchman by the name of Crillon, who calls himself a Count, they came first to Boston, and from Boston to this place, each of them bringing letters to the President from Gov. Gerry of Massachusetts. This is a fact well known. The Committee, to whom the Message was referred, saw Gerry's letter stating who Henry was. It is also ascertained that Henry was here in January, tho' not openly. That he is now gone, and when the Committee proposed sending for him, it was stated that the President made an engagement with him, that he should not be examined. It further appears that Crillon has given him a deed of land in France estimated at four thousand Francs, and the general opinion is that Crillon and Henry are both in the pay of France, and that the latter is to go there in the United States' ship *Wasp*. I wish you to shew this to your brother, and to tell him that there are facts respecting this Henry, and that we believe he calculated to favor Gerry's election, and the more so as he must have known them both, or he could not have given them letters of introduction. We expect it will make much noise in Massachusetts, but think if the federalists are in season they may turn it to their advantage.

WASHINGTON CITY, March 18, 1812

I have for some time past been in doubt whether to return before the adjournment of Congress, I feel strongly inclined to do it, but as things now are, altho' I do not feel that I can do much good, yet I do not know as I could justify it to my constituents to return until it is known whether we are to have an Embargo or War.

Since the President's extraordinary message little has been done in the house. By the federalists he is universally despised, and many of the democrats condemn the manner in which it was made. Many think he has been most grossly imposed upon by Henry. There is much trouble at the white house, as we call it, I mean the President's. His conduct begins to be unpopular, particularly in New York and I am told very much so in North Carolina, as well as elsewhere.

WASHINGTON CITY, March 22, 1812

When we arrived here last November the democrats were all in high spirits, the honor of the nation was to be maintained,

and we had a world of great speeches, full of fire and fury, but meaning nothing, or at least producing nothing. One would have thought, if he did know that dogs who bark most, bite least, that Canada would have been taken before this, and the fast anchored isle, old England, driven from her moorings. To all this blustering and railing we Federalists said nothing, choosing to give them the full length of their rope, and now the poor souls have got themselves into a sad dilemma, they know not how to go forward, or how to retreat, and what is still more disgraceful they have no settled plan which they mean to pursue, they depend upon the chapter of accidents, as they have done heretofore, but it is generally thought, the devil having fairly got them entrapped, will let them get out as they can. Were it not that the country may suffer from such consummate folly and wickedness, I should not mourn for their situation. But I trust it will all be for the best, and that the people seeing their folly, will withdraw their confidence from men so little capable of managing the affairs of a great nation.

We were taught by our good Fathers that honesty is the best policy, and that hypocrisy and deception were heinous crimes. From this we have been led to suppose that others were so instructed, but from my knowledge and acquaintance with certain little great men in and about this place, I am satisfied that the great art and study is to see who can best cheat and impose upon the public. Such is their desire of popularity and of office that no regard is paid to the means of acquiring or maintaining it. In trying times such men always flutter, and what they wish to do, they dare not, because forsooth they fear the people will not like it. This has kept back war and taxes, and to turn the people's attention from these odious topics, poor Jemmy gives Henry Fifty Thousand dollars to tell the truth of the administration, for that is the whole amount of it, altho' he meant it should have a different effect. This was a sad bargain for poor Madison, Henry has taken him in confoundedly, and the democrats, altho' at first they thought it a wonderful thing, are sorry it was ever meddled with. The New York democratic papers openly ridicule it, and even Duane and the editor of the *Baltimore Whig* treat it very sneeringly. All agree it is an electioneering trick, calculated

for the meridian of Massachusetts, and what is very singular Gov. Gerry must have known of it before Henry came here.

But what provokes me most is that the demo's here neither know what to do next, or when to do it, and are whiling away the time to no purpose. Tell Brother John that the federalists in Massachusetts ought to be up and doing. That all New York, as well democrats as federalists are against war, and if Strong is chosen in Massachusetts, they will be completely nonplussed here. But enough of Congress.

I attended meeting to-day and had a very good sermon from Doc.^r Hunter, chaplain to the Navy. His text was in Luke, I think 1 Chap. & 14 verse. Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace and good will to men. He gave a very interesting account of the birth of our Saviour, and of the humble manner of his coming into the world, of the gratitude we owe him &c.

WASHINGTON CITY, March 25th, 1812

Nothing new or important has been done in Congress since Henry's disclosures, and it is now supposed they are waiting to see how the election goes in Massachusetts. I doubt if any government in the world, young as ours, ever equalled it, in intrigue, corruption & deception. It sometimes happens that men get caught in their own traps, it is thought Madison will lose much more than he will gain by giving Henry \$50,000, for I am much mistaken if it is not at bottom a French plot, and I think time will prove it.

WASHINGTON CITY, March 27, 1812

If you are not prepared to complain of Congress for their folly, their tardiness, their wavering, their blustering, their inconsistency, their intrigue and everything else which is as it ought not to be, I can assure you that I am. They are managing as they did last session, doing what they ought not to, and leaving undone what they ought to do. If I am not very erroneous in my conjectures they will yet have an awful day of reckoning. But you will ask, why don't the federalists put them right? You might as well ask them, why not reason with a madman and try to convince him? No, we mean to let them run on, and if the people are disposed to bear with them, well, if not they may send them adrift, as I trust they will.

Of the distress the friends of Mr. Madison are in you may judge, when I state it as a fact, that they try to while away the time, without doing anything. This morning the house had not been in session more than half an hour before old Smilie moved that the house adjourn, which was carried, and then the house immediately adjourned. Indeed we have done nothing this fortnight. Now as it respects myself, if I must stay here, I care not how little business they do, for the less they do, the better.

WASHINGTON CITY, March 31, 1812

I have this day asked and obtained leave of absence from Monday next for the remainder of the Session. It is not however likely that I shall leave this place so soon by a week or a fortnight, but I thought it best to ask it thus seasonably, as it is probable in a short time it will be extremely difficult to obtain leave, and I wish to have it in my power to go when I please, for I am determined to be at home by the last of April.

It is now said we are to have an Embargo recommended tomorrow, I must stay to vote against it. It will not probably take many days to decide it, and by the last of April at furthest you may calculate to see me. I was so determined that I would no longer be the sport of uncertainty, that I would not be dependent upon the whim of Congress about going home, that I would be a free man, have the liberty to go, and then choose my own time, and if they choose to stay here all summer I am determined not to stay with them. Gen.¹ Chittenden has also obtained leave of absence and we mean to start together.

WASHINGTON CITY, April 3, 1812

I am very happy I have obtained leave of absence, for I see no prospect of Congress rising before the middle of June, and to stay here till then I could not, and ought not, and should be of no use to the nation if I did. Men when mad will do as they please, and the best way is to let them cure themselves by raving till they are tired of it. They begin now to do business with closed doors, and the people will I suppose conjecture a thousand things, perhaps some may think that they prefer darkness to light because their deeds are evil. After you

receive this it will hardly be worth while to write me again, as by the time it reaches you I mean to be on my way home, or at least within a few days after, so that the letters might not reach me. I don't know what my constituents may say at my leaving my post, but they must allow me to judge of the propriety of that, I do not expect, however, they will concern themselves much about it.

If Congress, I mean the majority men, had done their duty, we might all have been off by this time. I am tired of such men and such measures, and I much doubt if it is any better very soon.

WASHINGTON CITY, April 5, 1812

A pilgrim was never more desirous of getting to the end of his journey, than I am of getting home. My fellow boarders are to be sure all good men, and I could not be more happy in my mess, than in the one where I am, as they are all steady men, and that, if nothing else, keeps me so. But I am tired of going into the hall every day, and hearing the nonsense, and seeing no measure adopted which does not instead of having a tendency to benefit the country, rather look like destroying it. I think it not improbable there will soon be a recess of six or seven weeks, in that case all will go home. If there should not be a recess I see not but Congress must be here till July.

I attended meeting this forenoon, and was much entertained with the preaching of a Mr. McLeod of New York. He is a young man, his manner is very impressive, and his matter very good, qualities seldom to be found in a preacher here. His text was in John, the substance of it, for I do not recollect the words precisely, was, Why will ye not come unto me and have life. He was not only able in his mode of reasoning upon the the subject, but enforced his arguments with much eloquence.

WASHINGTON, April 8th, 1812

In a few days I calculate to be on my way home, as soon as the beginning of next week. We have had a very curious farce acted in the house in the course of the last and present week. Last Wednesday, being all fools day, the President sent us a confidential message, the galleries were cleared, and the message was read. It recommended an Embargo for

sixty days, without assigning any other reason, than the existing state of things. A bill was immediately reported, and the house sat in secret till eleven O'Clock at night, when the bill was passed. But lo! the next morning, the *Alexandria Herald*, a democratic paper, publishes the whole of the proceedings, who was in the chair, who were the speakers, and the bill for laying an Embargo had passed the house the last night by a majority of thirty, all which was true. The next day the same thing is published in the *Spirit of Seventy Six* paper printed at Georgetown. The democratic members are all in a rage, some vile federalist has divulged the secret, he shall be found out and expelled. A motion is made to appoint a committee of investigation, and agreed to, a committee is appointed, with power to send for persons, papers and records. Mr. Prentiss was first called, who stated that he furnished the statement which appeared in the *Spirit of Seventy Six*, but that he did not derive his information or any part of it from any member or officer of the house, but that he derived it from Rounsenvelle* the Editor of the *Alexandria Herald*. Rounsenvelle is next called, he acknowledged that he derived his information from a conversation with members soon after the house adjourned on Wednesday evening, that he took a part in the conversation and that they knew him and he them. Upon being asked by the Committee, last Saturday, who they were, he refused to answer. The Committee ordered him to be kept in custody of the Sergeant at Arms until Monday, Monday comes, he is brought before them again, but still refuses to answer, the committee make report to the house, and the house order him to be brought before them, and direct the Speaker to ask him the same question, he is brought into the house, sworn, the question asked by the Speaker, but he still refuses to answer, and is ordered back to the custody of the Sergeant at Arms. It is well ascertained, however, that the sin of divulging the secret must fall on democratic members, but they have got themselves into the scrape, and must get out as well as they can, it is our bull who has done the mischief, and that alters the case, the same thing which would have expelled a federalist, is scarcely a crime now. But what shall be done. The wit-

*N. Rounsavell and J. Corse were the proprietors of the *Alexandria Herald* in 1812.

ness has treated the authority of the house with contempt, and it will not do to let him off.

Another day, yesterday arrives, something must be done, and unable any longer to keep the thing off, old Smilie gets up and says he can tell the house how Rounselvelle got his information, it was from a conversation with a member who was not at the house, which he supposes Rounselvelle heard, this is quite satisfactory to the democrats, Smilie is considered as quite honorable in giving the information, and house agree if Rounselvelle will only come in now and say he is willing to answer, all which he understands, he shall be discharged and no questions asked, and so the poor devils get out of the scrape, which would have been a most dreadful thing, had it fallen on a federalist.

WASHINGTON, April 10th, 1812

It is probable this is the last letter I shall write you from this place this Spring, as I intend to be on my way home the day after to-morrow, unless something more than I know of now should prevent, and I hope to be at Worcester as soon as the week after next Monday or Tuesday. If I can find time on my way I will write you again. I find all the eastern members very anxious to return home, and a short adjournment is talked of, to meet the first of June, indeed the proposition is now before the house, but will not perhaps be carried.

Thursday I went on board the frigate *Constitution*, which is now at the Navy Yard, and saw them fire their guns, they made a good cracking.

There is nothing here new of much importance. War is much talked of, and it is possible will be declared, but I am yet an unbeliever in it. My staying will have no tendency to prevent it, and perhaps it is as well to have it now as to keep eternally talking and blustering about it. With such administration as we now have, and such men to guide and direct the measures as are now in power, and such a disposition in the people to support them, we must expect some grievous calamity to befall us, before we can have better times.

Saturday morning, April 11, 1812. The most pleasing intelligence I have to communicate is that I expect to set out

to-morrow morning for home, and I hope with good luck to be at Worcester as soon as the week after next Tuesday or Wednesday.

WASHINGTON CITY, June 7, 1812

I have attended meeting this day both forenoon and afternoon, and was much pleased with a discourse delivered by a Mr. Clark, whose matter and manner were both good, and in the afternoon I heard Mr. Dana of Newburyport, whose matter was good, but manner indifferent.

The state of things here is somewhat novel, and it is very difficult to calculate what is to be the result. There is much electioneering going on, and I am apprehensive the votes of many are influenced more by private than public views.

There appear to be several descriptions of men in Congress. Among the number, are a few, whose every step is directed by a conscientious regard to the interest and prosperity of the country. Others, and the number is too great, are influenced by ambitious views of self aggrandizement, and care little what becomes of the country, provided their own ends are obtained. Others, and the number is great, are men of small minds, contracted views, and led on as it were blindfold, to vote for and support measures, which are dictated to them by their ambitious leaders. There is still another description, who are perhaps equally criminal with the leaders, and these are those whose reason, understanding and conscience are in direct opposition to their votes. A fear of offending the party, of being proscribed, or of loosing another election operates more powerfully upon their minds than the dictates of reason and conscience. Such are the men, who compose the Congress of the United States, and if wisdom, prudence, or integrity and uprightness of conduct is expected from them, I fear the expectation will be delusive. There are hopes of the Senate. As a body, they are much superior to the House, and their conduct, it is yet hoped, will be marked with more wisdom. But whatever is done, it is hoped and believed will eventually be for the best, and that adversity will produce more virtue and wisdom.

WASHINGTON CITY, June 14, 1812

It is quite uncertain when Congress will rise, but I apprehend, at farthest, by the beginning of July, indeed I shall be unwilling to tarry here longer, as the heat will be excessive. My health as yet is very good.

As to the proceedings of Congress I can say but little, as they sit principally with closed doors. War against Great Britain is not yet declared, whether it will be is impossible to say, it is considered doubtful. Madness, rage and folly are the order of the day. One would think that the western people, who are most zealous for war, had better have it with the Indians, as they appear to have their hands full in defending their frontiers against them. The taxes will not be laid this session, war or no war, because it might endanger Madison's reelection; after that is secured they will then put them on. Nothing but a fear of losing their places keeps them from taking more rapid strides. It is well anything restrains them.

I should not be surprised, if they should take it into their heads to pass a gag law, neither should I much care, for the people of this country will not be restrained from an expression of their sentiments.

WASHINGTON, June 16, 1812

When I connect, to the anxiety I feel for the result of the measures which there is a strong probability will be pursued by Congress the present session, the solicitude I feel for your health and happiness and that of my children, whose future prosperity may be so much influenced by the fate of the country, I confess I feel not a little alarmed. However we ought not to despond, but the more the storm rages, the greater ought to be our resolution. The mind of man never displays itself to greater advantage than when in the midst of troubles and dangers, it preserves its fortitude and rises superior to all the difficulties it has to encounter. Good may come out of evil. The Shays insurrection, altho' at first extremely alarming, eventuated in good, and the storm which is now gathering and threatens our country with all the horrors and calamities of war, may eventually be the means of preserving our liberties. That it will, if declared, be brought

about by French intrigue, by ambitious and speculating individuals, there is no doubt, and if it should be the means of putting down an administration unfit, both in talents and integrity, the effect upon the future destinies of the nation may be auspicious, and from a British war, it may happen, that it will bring the people to their senses, and that before France shall have succeeded in destroying our liberties, we shall rise in our strength against them and be successful. At all events, let us do our duty, and hope for the best.

WASHINGTON CITY, June 24th, 1812

I have nothing new to write, I board where I did before and with the old mess. War is declared, but no means provided for carrying it on, and whether it will be done is uncertain. The money in the treasury is almost exhausted and what is to become of public credit and honor the Lord only knows.

If the people do not entrust the management of public affairs to more able hands our case is rather desperate, but I trust a proper remedy will be applied, before it is too late.

WASHINGTON CITY, Nov. 2, 1812

This day, which is remarkably fair and pleasant, the Representatives of the people, such as they have seen fit to send, are to meet for the purpose of managing the affairs of this great nation. God grant they may succeed better than they have hitherto done, but of this I can form no opinion, not yet being able to discover what course they intend to pursue. A quorum of the house will probably be formed, but it is thought the Senate will not have a sufficient number to form a quorum.

The house at 12 O. C. met, the Clerk called the names of the members when eighty-four appeared, twelve more than a quorum, the Senate have not a sufficient number for a quorum. The house after appointing a Committee to wait on the Senate and inform them that they had formed a quorum, another to wait on the President for the same purpose, agreeing that the hour for meeting should be eleven O. C. and that the members should be furnished with Newspapers, such as each one may select, the price of which by the year do not exceed thirty dollars, they adjourned, so that one day's session is past.

I promised to give you an account of my journey from New York, which I will now do. I mentioned in my last* my arrival there on Monday morning, where I tarried until evening, when I crossed the river and lodged at a tavern on the Jersey side, so as to be ready to take the stage in the morning. Tuesday morning about six took the stage and arrived at Philadelphia about ten in the evening, lodged at the Mansion House, formerly the residence of a Mr. Bingham, but now kept as a Hotel.

Wednesday it rained in the forenoon, and I concluded to tarry until Thursday, dined with Mr. Soderstrom the Swedish Consul, and next morning took the Stage for Baltimore where I arrived about nine in the evening. On Friday lodged at Gadsby's, where from one to two hundred people lodged. This is the largest establishment of the kind in the United States. Here I tarried all Friday and viewed the City of Baltimore, went into one of their flour mills, which was to me a great curiosity, never having seen one before. Viewed also their State prison and saw the gaol where Hanson &c. were so infamously treated by the mob. Saturday took the Stage for Washington and arrived about 3 O. C.

Tuesday, Nov. 3, 1812. This day the house met, waited for the Committee to go to the President's and inform him that both branches had formed a quorum and were ready to receive any communications from him, and returned for answer that he would make his communication to-morrow at twelve O'Clock, and then the house adjourned.

I have this day located myself with my last winter mess, excepting Sturgis, at a Mr. Rhoades, each of us having a separate room. His house is about forty rods from the Capitol, and present appearances are that we shall be better accomodated than heretofore, and the cookery seems more in the New England stile.

Nov. 8, 1812

The only thing of importance which has occured in the house, was a proposition for an Embargo, which was rejected by a large majority, 76 to 26. As the circumstances attending this proposition are somewhat curious I will give you a history of it.

*There is no such letter in the collection.

On Friday, soon after the house met, Harper of N. Hampshire, who has a much more exalted opinion of himself, than other people have of him, suggested to the house that he had a resolution to offer, which in his opinion required secrecy, the galleries were cleared, and he then offered a resolution instructing the Committee of Commerce and Manufactures to bring in a bill to prohibit the exportation of flour and other bread stuff; assigning as a reason that the people in the eastern states, whose crops of corn were cut off, would be in a state of starvation, unless they could purchase, and while the exportation of it to Spain and Portugal was permitted, the prices were so high, that they could not purchase it. The advocates for the resolution were old Widgery, who thought it necessary, because the people in Maine were like to be without bread, and because it would tend to starve the enemy, Macon, who thought we ought first to provide for all parts of the Country, Newton, one of your little great men, who thinks the whole weight of the government is on his shoulders, while in fact he is hardly fit for a Town officer, thought it would be a very efficient means of carrying on the war, by starving the enemy, and Doc.^f Mitchell who, tho' a great scholar, and very learned in natural philosophy, geography and chemistry, is but an indifferent politician, because this is a kind of trading war, British vessels being neutralized, under Spanish and Portuguese Registers and permitted to load in our ports and clear out with their cargoes.

Against it were Wright, Stanford, Stow, Pitkin, Pleasants, Goldsborough and Calhoun. Wright is a Marylander, where they raise a vast deal of wheat, and altho' a violent democrat, furious for the war, and formerly in favor of restrictive measures, had now rather feed the enemy and supply her armies in Spain and Portugal, than not get a good price for his wheat, and this appeared to be the sentiment of all the Marylanders, Virginians & Pennsylvanians formerly so fond of Embargoes. Let it affect their interests and they are no more fond of Embargoes than the New Englanders. I consider this an important vote, it will shew the people of New England what sort of Patriotism it is of which these southern Members make so much boast, it goes beyond their interest.

WASHINGTON CITY, Nov. 17, 1812

I have nothing new, upon which I can certainly depend, as to the result of the Presidential election. It excites much interest here, and prevents much business being done, too many being more interested, or rather, feeling more interested in the result of that election, than in the happiness and prosperity of the Country. A more improper and unfit man for President than Madison it would be difficult to have. His eye has been too long fixed on his own re-election, and he endeavors to pursue those measures, however contrary to his judgment, as respects the interests of the nation, which will be most likely to secure it; advancing to, and retreating from his great object, the conquest of the Canada's and I fear a coalition with France, as the temper and feelings of the people will bear it. The result of the late elections in New Hampshire and Massachusetts have struck them, like an unexpected clap of thunder, or an Earthquake. They will pause for a while, and if they can bring back the people to support them, will go on.

The report from Ohio, that Clinton will have the votes of that State is another damper, and they begin to entertain serious doubts of Madison's re-election. They say now they should much rather have a federal President than Clinton, and that they would join the federalists in supporting one, if they thought Clinton likely to succeed. I would not, however, trust them, and can hardly say I should wish under all circumstances, to have a federal President. But whether Madison is re-elected, or not, there is a very strong prospect of a majority in the house, in the next Congress, not of federalists, but of Peace men, and among whom and the federalists there will be no disagreement.

WASHINGTON CITY, Dec. 1, 1812

Last week I was much engaged in investigating some subjects which will soon come before the house, and upon which I wished to be well informed, whether I said anything upon them in the house or not. On Sunday I went to Alexandria, in company with our mess, & Messrs. Potter, Bleecker & Milnor, on the invitation of a Mr. Catlett, who is a very civil man and treated us with much cordiality. Our intention was to have

attended church, but on arriving there found that one of our former Chaplains, whom we had not much inclination to hear, was to preach there, and we did not attend. We dined with him, and returned in good season.

Nothing has been transacted in the house for some days of sufficient importance to trouble you with. The Senate, much to their honor, have rejected that part of a bill which passed this house, authorizing minors to enlist without the consent of their parents, guardians or masters. Only four voted for retaining it, among whom was Varnum.

WASHINGTON CITY, Dec. 9, 1812

We have been engaged in the house, every day, Sunday excepted, on a Report of the Committee of Ways and Means, relative to the late important subject which has been, or will be before us during the present Session. The simple state of the case is this. On the 23d. June last the Orders in Council were revoked, and the nonimportation act, had not War been declared on the 18th June, would have ceased of course. The merchants having a vast many goods in England, amounting to more than twenty millions of dollars, which were stored there, waiting the repeal of the non-importation act, immediately on the orders in council being repealed, had them shipped to this country, in pursuance of orders which had been previously given. On their arrival here they find in consequence of the war that the non-importation act is not repealed, and that by the letter of the law their vessels and cargoes are forfeited. It is evident they had no intention to violate the law, Mr. Russell acting as our minister there told them, that is the agents of the merchants in England, that they might ship their goods with safety. The Committee of Ways and Means, to whom their petitions were refered, have reported a resolution the purport of which is to give the Secretary of the Treasury power to mitigate or remit the forfeitures in whole or in part as he shall think proper. Justice, equity, humanity and every other principle demand on the part of Congress an immediate discharge of all penalties which they have incurred by bringing in their goods. Indeed it would be little better than robbery to call upon them for the forfeitures. But a

great many of the majority in the house pay no regard to moral considerations. To keep their places is the object, money must be had, they are afraid to tax the people directly, and what they can get from the merchants is free plunder. The federalists have not as yet said any thing upon the question, the better part of the democrats are for relieving them at once, and we think it best to let them dispute it among themselves, at least, for the present. Some of the democratic party have spoken with a boldness against the report, which does them honor.

Last night they had great rejoicings in this City in consequence of the news of the capture of the *Macedonia* by Commodore Decatur. All the houses were illuminated, and guns fired. I kept, however, in my room minding my own business, and feeling a little satisfaction that even democracy is reluctantly compelled to do honor to federalism, for the Navy is not only of federal origin, but nearly all the officers are federal.

WASHINGTON CITY, Dec. 12, 1812

A great deal of my time is taken up, by being one of the Committee on public lands. It was a subject with which I had but little acquaintance, and I wish to understand it. We meet every tuesday and friday morning at ten O'Clock, but it is necessary I find to attend to it in my chamber, in order to know anything about it.

I intended before this to have written Charles a letter, but have not found time. His father* has not been here this session. I conclude he is writing the life of General Eaton.

WASHINGTON, December 13, 1812

I attended meeting to-day, and heard a sermon from Mr. Breckenridge, Chaplain to the Senate. He is a good man, I believe, but I cannot say a very able sermonizer.

The house are still engaged on the merchants bonds, what the decision will be is quite uncertain. The Senate, much to their honor, have passed a bill 25 to 5, for discharging them unconditionally, and I hope the house will do the same.

*Charles Prentiss, who published his "Life of General Eaton" at Brookfield in 1813.

WASHINGTON CITY, Dec. 18, 1812

These are surely extraordinary times, and it behoves the friends of peace and of their country to be on the alert. The most sanguine calculator could not have expected better success than the friends of peace have had in the Congressional elections. We have just received news of the success of the Federal ticket in Vermont. The Legislature of that state, in order to have all demo's, adopted a general ticket, and it seems they have lost the whole. This reminds me of a verse in an old version of psalms.

He digged a pit, he digged it deep,
He digged it for his brother,
By means of sin he did fall in,
The pit he digged for tother.

The conduct of our armies is truly disgraceful. The great proclaimating Smythe, commander of the army of the centre, is completely disgraced, and we are told here has fled from his army for fear of assassination. What a deplorable situation. If the war hawks do not have a day of awful retribution I am much deceived, and I believe now many of them are most heartily sick of their war. Never were the affairs of a nation conducted worse than ours. Not a single measure have they adopted for years, which has not injured the Country, much more than their enemies. I envy not Madison his reelection. His situation must be truly wretched, and he richly deserves it. From the next Congress he can have little support, and if he does not contrive soon to get out of this war, I know not what he can do. For he can neither get money, unless they rob the merchants, which I think they dare not, and the doleful situation of the armies will not afford much encouragement for men to enlist.

WASHINGTON CITY, December 22, 1812

This day I had to attend on the Committee of Public lands before the house met, and after the house met they were in session until after four O'Clock, and passed two important bills to a third reading. The one to authorise the President to build four Seventy-fours and six frigates, by a majority, I think of eight votes, the federalists, with one or two exceptions,

voting in favor of it. The other was to relieve the Merchants from the penalties and forfeitures incurred by the late importations. The bill embraces about three fourths of the importations, another bill is to be reported to embrace the others. This passes 62 to 58, all the federalists voting for it. Whether either of the bills will pass is yet somewhat doubtful.

Monroe is now acting as Secretary of War and is, it is expected, to have the chief command in the Army. He intends next year to do great things. He has recommended to the Committee on Military affairs, as I am informed, an increase of the regular Army to 50,000 and to persuade persons to enlist, to give them forty dollars bounty and ten dollars to the recruiting officer for every man he enlists, and promises in the course of the next year to have possession of the Canada's and the Florida's. Whether he is serious in all this I don't know, if he is serious, I think he is seriously mad. It may be a bold push to induce the house to request the President to make peace, or it may be, to raise a larger army, and silence opposition in the northern and eastern States. The Virginia Junto are determined to rule us, but I think they will find it more difficult than they expected.

Captain Law of New York, a brother of Mr. Law, Member from Connecticut, dined with us this day. He has a wife and family in New York which he has not seen for three years, having been at sea, had his vessel captured, discharged, captured again and discharged. He was last from Russia, having had a long and unfortunate passage, losing one of their masts, and at length was driven on shore in North Carolina, from whence he came to this place and is now on his way to his family. He brought dispatches from Mr. Adams our Minister in Russia, of what nature I do not know.

WASHINGTON CITY, Dec. 26, 1812

I hasten to send you a plan of the Hall in which I am doomed to sit day after day. You will perceive by it the seat which I occupy, the red places are the desks on which we write, and where the names are placed the chairs in which we sit. I am now writing this in my place in the Hall, altho' Congress do not sit to-day. Yesterday was Christmas, and the house did not

meet, many of the members having been educated in the habit of observing, which they do, more perhaps from custom, than any principle of religion. I attended a Roman Catholic Church yesterday, but cannot say I thought there was much religion in their ceremonies. The music and the sermon, however, were very good, and upon the whole was not sorry I attended. I should like to have this drawing preserved as it will enable me to give those who enquire of me a correct view of the Hall.*

WASHINGTON CITY, Dec. 27, 1812

In the morning I was occupied preparing for meeting and intended immediately after meeting and dinner to retire to my room and commence [a letter]. I have done this and just got my table in order when in comes Mr. Macon and Mr. Grundy, and as all the Gentlemen, except General Champion and myself were out, I was compelled by civility and politeness to leave my room and sit and chat with them. The subject of conversation was principally in relation to the war and how to get money to carry it on. If any judgment is to be formed from their conversation I should be inclined to believe they are both rather sick of it, and would be glad to see an end of it. Thus disappointed I determined immediately after supper to begin my letter, & came to my room, but had been there but a few minutes before the servant comes up and says some Gentlemen are below and wish to see you. I went down and found Col. Talmadge, Mr. Potter and Mr. Jackson, who tarried till after nine O'Clock, conversing about the war, the wasteful expenditure of public money, how to investigate and discover some of their vile practices and misconduct, &c. &c.

By the way I think upon one point we have opened the way for an investigation. It seems that in 1805 Congress by a resolution directed the President to procure a gold medal for Commodore Preble, and a sword for the officers who served under him in a gallant naval action to be presented to them as a testimony of the high sense entertained by Congress of their gallant conduct. It seems the Secretary of the Navy charged twenty thousand dollars for procuring the medal and the

*This drawing is not preserved in his papers.

swords, but not one of the swords has ever been delivered and no one knows where they are, or what has become of them, and it is not improbable that they will find it difficult to account for the expenditure of the \$20,000.

Monday Even'g. December 28th, 1812. This day nothing special has occurred. The house did considerable business, but nothing of a very important nature. I mentioned that I went to meeting, I will now give you an account of the Sermon, and the occasion of it. A Masonic Lodge, in this thought proper to notice the festival of St. John, and they were allowed, by what authority I know not, to have seats in the hall to which they marched in procession, about 60 or 70, tolerably decent men all of them, and Doc.^t Hunter, Chaplain to the Navy, who is a Mason, preached a sermon adapted to the occasion. His text was in Matthew 5th Chapt. 9th verse. Blessed are the peace makers; for they shall be called the children of God. As Madison was there I liked his text very well, and his sermon was very good. I hope the text and sermon did not offend him so much as parson Laury offended Jefferson some years ago, when he attended his meeting. It seems Mr. Laury, indeed I heard the fact from his own mouth, as a part of the divine service read the 2d. Chap. of the 2d. Epistle general of Peter, and that Jefferson never spoke to him after. By recurring to the Chapter you will see how well it applied to him.

Tuesday, even'g. Dec. 29. This day the house have had under consideration two important bills, one for authorising the President to appoint additional officers, to wit, one major in each regiment, and one third lieutenant to each company in the present military establishment, altho' now the proportion of officers is much greater than that of soldiers.

The other bill is to increase the army 20,000 more, which will make in the whole on paper 55,000, but where or when they will get them is a very different question. The bills were reported by D. R. Williams, and as usual he opened the debate by stating the objects for which they are to be raised. This was in Committee of the whole. It seems the plan is with these men to take the Floridas, Canada and Halifax. Volunteers and Militia they give up. When Williams had finished his

speech he moved to have the Committee rise and report the bills without amendment. Mr. Pitkin objected, and moved that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again, and pointed out some principles of the bill which were wrong and ought to be amended. I advocated Mr. Pitkin's motion by observing that altho' the bills were reported some days since, we had not until this day been informed of the plan of operations, that it was impossible, without some time allowed for reflection to form a correct opinion of the proposed plan. I observed further that I had expected from him as Chairman of the military Committee a calculation as to the probable expense of the additional force and additional officers. That it was important we should have some information on this point. I observed that I was happy to hear that his object was to induce Great Britain to make peace. That I did not believe this the best mode. That threatening her colonies in America would rather rouse her resentment. That a prudent, deliberate course on our part, would be much more likely to convince her of our ability to manage the war, than rashly and inconsiderately undertaking more than it was in our power to effect &c.

I enclose you a short description of the South wing of the Capitol, on the second floor of which is the Representatives' Hall, which I wish you to preserve.* On the ground floor are Committee rooms, and the clerk's office in which are kept the records &c.

WASHINGTON CITY, Jan'y 3, 1813

The weather has been very singular here for some time. Yesterday we had a heavy fall of rain, accompanied with much wind, and with thunder and lightening, and when we were at dinner, which was about four O'clock it was so dark that we were obliged to have candles. It however cleared away just before sundown, and a bright and beautiful rainbow appeared in the northeast. I never witnessed such a scene before, especially in the month of January. I could not but compare it to the situation of this country, and I hope my comparison will prove true.

*Not preserved in his papers.

Yesterday in the house an interesting debate took place on the bills for raising the bounty on enlistments, for adding additional officers to the regiments now authorised to be raised, to wit, a major to each, a lieutenant and serjeant to each company, altho' now there are officers enough with nothing to do, for 15 or 20 thousand men, and also for authorising the raising of 20 thousand more men, which if passed and the men can be raised, will make in the whole fifty five thousand men. This madness and folly on the part of the administration I considered as representing the storm, the darkness as the crisis which is to be the overthrow of the political madmen who have brought all the calamities which we are suffering upon us, and the appearance of the sun and the rainbow as the return of peace and correct principles. God grant that such may be the issue. To-morrow I expect the debate will be resumed and be still more interesting, unless the majority by the previous question or by a night session should prevent the federalists from speaking. I understand Randolph, Quincy, Bleecker, Emott & some others intend to speak, and I shall endeavor to procure a number of them for my friends, and send them on, if possible. One reason I have not sent them anything is, there has been but little worth a sending, and another has been a want of time.

One of our members, as you may have noticed in the papers, Mr. Smilie, of Pennsylvania, died on the 30th and was buried on the last of December. He was about 71 years of age, and was sick about a fortnight, with no particular complaint, except old age. He was an Irishman by birth, a great friend of Gallatin's, and I saw no one who looked more like a mourner than Gallatin, not excepting his colleague and friend, old Mr. Findley, who is about as old. Smilie was a man of some shrewdness, had been long in public life, and I very much doubt his approving in heart all the measure which have been pursued.

I attended meeting to-day, but cannot say I was much edified. It is a shame and a disgrace to the nation to choose for a Chaplain to Congress such a man as Lee. Not that he is not a good man, but his discourses, they deserve not the name of sermons, are too vulgar for the most illiterate congregation

which could be found in Massachusetts, or even in New England. And what is more disgraceful most of those who voted for him seldom attend, while those who voted for a better one, prefer to hear him, rather than none.

WASHINGTON, Jan'y 5th, 1813

I rejoice whenever I hear of anything likely to prove beneficial to my friends in general, to my country, or to the world. I cannot, therefore, but be highly pleased with the news from Europe. It is consoling, that while this country has been aiding the cause of the most abominable tyrant on the face of the earth, the oppressed nations of Europe awakened from their slumbers, have exerted their combined and mighty efforts, and with the blessing of God, have compelled the monster, with immense loss, to flee back to the ancient limits of France for safety. Immortal honor will be the reward of the bold, enlightened and generous warriors, who have been the instruments of setting bounds to the power and ambition of the daring usurper of the rights of men & nations.

WASHINGTON CITY, Jan'y 6th, 1813

The house of Representatives have been incessantly engaged since Monday in debate on the army bill, which goes to authorise the raising of 20,000 additional troops. The debates for the most part have been peculiarly able and interesting. Mr. Quincy & Mr. Bleecker have distinguished themselves more than any other members, tho' others have done well. I intend to distribute the speeches freely, as I think they will do much good.

January 10th, 1813

My only amusements here are my book, my pen, my attention in the hall, conversation with the mess, and such as call on us, walking and drawing. I have not attended one levee, and shall not this session. The picture drawn of them by Quincy in a late speech, which I shall send, when published, will deter many from going there. The interesting debate which I mentioned in my last is not yet finished. Mr. Sheffey is to speak to-morrow, and it is expected that Randolph, Emott, Key and David R. Williams will also speak and I hope then the question will be taken. The victory both as it

respects the justice of the cause, the ability and eloquence of the Speakers is and must continue decidedly on the part of the friends of peace, tho' no doubt the majority in the house will pass the bill for the additional 20,000 men, its fate in Senate is more doubtful.

There are two more important subjects which may be acted upon this Session. The first a classification of the Militia, which it is possible will not be taken up. The other, altho' no bill is yet reported, will be to authorise the President to borrow from 20 to 30 millions of dollars to defray the expenses of this year. What would not have been the clamor in former times at the project of paying the expenses of government by loans, without providing any means of payment. This is not much less dangerous than raising an army. If the majority dare not in the outset lay a foundation for paying the expenses of government, what will they do when the loans become increased from 20 to 100 millions, when the ability of the people from the distresses of the war will be diminished, and when the taxes must be much greater in amount? Those who made the war must be responsible. They must be responsible for the preservation of public faith, for the preservation of our liberty, for the success of the war, a responsibility too great for them, and one which must eventually sink them. I pray God they may not sink the country with them.

I attended meeting both forenoon and afternoon this day, and heard two very Christian discourses from Doc.^t Muir of Alexandria. His text in the forenoon was in 2 Corinthians, 13 Chapter, 13 verse. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity. It was preached in the hall introductory to a contribution for the purpose of spreading a knowledge of the gospel in Asia. The sum obtained was about 58 dollars. An address was also delivered by a Mr. Wilmer, giving a history of the progress of Christianity in those parts. In the afternoon Doc.^t Muir's text was the 1st and 2d. verses of the first Psalm, which, altho' it appeared to be wholly extemporaneous, was very good.

WASHINGTON CITY, Jan'y 11, 1813

This day the bill for raising 20,000 additional troops was again taken up and discussed. It was opposed by Mr.

Sheffey in a speech of about three hours. He was attempted to be answered by Mr. Robertson from the new state of Louisiana, who appears to be a man of considerable talents, but in favor of the war, and prosecuting it with vigor, tho' for a strange reason, as I thought he said they were exposed to the British, the Indians, and the slaves, now, it appears to me, that a peace would relieve them from these exposures.

Jan'y 12. This day the same subject was again resumed. Mr. Emott spoke for four hours against the bill. He took a full view of the causes of war, and shew 1st, That it ought not to have been declared when it was, & 2d, if it was then right, it was not right now to continue it, the orders in council, one of the principal causes of war no longer existing. He proved first that the blockades which were made one cause of the war did not exist, that the orders in council of Nov. 1807 which were made another cause of war, did not exist at the time war was declared, being repealed by those of 1809, which were much less injurious. He then took a full view of the only remaining cause of war, that of impressment, and placed it on ground which sophistry cannot refute—in fact that we are now fighting for the right of protecting British subjects in our own vessels. Mr. Macon then rose and spoke about two hours, and a most extraordinary speech it was. It had nothing to do with the bill, but was a sort of newspaper slang, collected from the democratic papers for ten or twelve years past.

Jan'y 13. This day the subject was again resumed, and is now under consideration. Mr. Cutts, Brother in Law of the President, rose to abuse Quincy for his satire of the President and his satellites some days since. He reminded me of the old maxim, the galled jade winces &c.

It is now one O'Clock and I expect we shall have to sit till 9 or 10 O'Clock at night, as the final question is to be taken this day.

WASHINGTON CITY, Jan'y 15, 1813

Congress last evening decided the important question which authorises the President to raise 20,000 additional troops, which will make the army of the United States 55,000, provided the Senate pass the bill, and the troops can be raised.

The people must be on their guard against the attempts of a certain class of men who will use their utmost endeavors and arts to persuade them that the administration are desirous of making a speedy peace. Their not having fairly and honestly embraced the opportunity afforded by the repeal of the orders in council, is strong evidence against them.

WASHINGTON CITY, Jan'y 17, 1813

We have had much said in Congress this session in praise of National honor and glory. They have become so much the burden of the song, that National faith and credit appear to have shared the fate of the poor, wise man, who, by his wisdom saved the city, and yet no man remembered him. National honor and National glory have a charm in the sound which strike sweet music to certain ears, while National faith and National credit strike them like the harsh notes of discord. Now I admire National honor and glory as much as any of them, but it must be that honor and glory, which has virtue and justice for its basis, and which is connected with public faith and credit. These are as essential to true national honor and glory, as purity of mind is to the perfection of beauty. I am no admirer of the glory of conquest. I admire not the glory of an Alexander, a Julius Caesar, or a Napoleon. I desire not that American glory which is to be acquired on the plains of Abraham, or at the walls of Quebec. When the 20,000,000 loan bill comes up, I intend they shall have my opinion on some of these subjects, whether it please them or not. They have been attacked, however, with such a heavy cannonade from our side of the house, that I think I shall be in no great danger, in attacking them with small arms.

WASHINGTON, Jan'y 26, 1813

Having made the remarks which I intended to make on the loan bill, I have now leisure to listen to the arguments of others. Mr. Gold, as you will see by my plan of the Hall, is now addressing the Speaker. He says, on the subject of finance, the wit of man has never been able to preserve public credit, in any other way, than by providing funds for extinguishing debts whenever contracted. He says the President recommended this in his message at the last session, and I can add, from good authority,

that it was his fault, that such a fund was not adopted, and the reason was, that he was afraid taxing the people would cost him his election. Such are the acts of modern politicians to keep their places. The public credit may be destroyed, the people impoverished, the country nearly ruined, provided they can keep their places, and provide for the special friends and sycophants of the administration.

WASHINGTON CITY, Jan'y 31st, 1813

I will now, tho' perhaps I ought not, say a few words about my speech, and speechmaking here, and which you will keep to yourself. I am perfectly willing every man should have all the praise and credit to which he is honestly and honorably entitled. I am willing to join in bestowing it liberally myself. But when I see them covetous of allowing to others what they deserve, when I see them disposed to think that none but a select few know anything, or have any talents, it does not give me so exalted an opinion of their magnanimity and candor as I should wish to have. There is too much of this spirit in Congress, and the Editors of the *Federal Republican* have foolishly in my opinion, lent their aid to encourage it. It will, however, rectify itself.

In speaking of the Speeches on the Army bill, they observed that all the talents of the house were exerted, altho' many did not speak, because enough was said, and not content with this, they singled out a few, as having particularly distinguished themselves. This sort of puffing is very improper and injudicious, and has offended many of the members.

As it respects my own on the loan bill, I will only say I am not ashamed of it, nor of the manner in which it was delivered, and that I am willing the public should judge of its merits, comparing it with some of those which were so much puffed off. Indeed I feel perfectly above such little arts of gaining applause, and, if it does not come fairly and honorably, I do not wish it. I should not have said so much, even to you, had not some of my federal friends said the same to me, and expressed the same opinions which I have here expressed, and even this you must keep strictly to yourself. What I have said on this subject, is not at all by way of complaint, as it respects

myself, for I have no fear but I shall receive quite as much credit as I deserve.

WASHINGTON, Feb'y 7th, 1813

I calculate to send you several packets containing documents which I wish you to preserve. A bill has been before the house to exclude foreigners from being employed on board our vessels, in order, as is pretended, to afford Great Britain no apology for search our vessels for her own seamen, and with an intention to effect a peace, as they say. But the real object in my opinion is, to make the people believe they are desirous of peace by making another offer which they do not believe will be accepted. I consider the administration as mean, base and cowardly, neither fit, or capable of making an honorable peace, or waging a successful war.

WASHINGTON CITY, Feb'y 9th, 1813

We have this moment received some serious news, if true, and it comes in a manner to entitle it to credit. The news is that Gen^l Winchester has had his whole army cut up at the river Raisin, about 20 or 30 miles from Detroit. That he is killed, and his army, consisting of about 1700, with the exception of a very few, are taken or killed.

Two British 74^s and four frigates have chased the *Constellation* into Norfolk, and not unlikely e'er this have cut her out. So much for this abominable war. The house are engaged on their seamen, or intended gull-trap bill, which makes it difficult for me to write more at this time.

WASHINGTON, Sunday, Feb'y 14, 1813

When I went down [to dinner] I found Cap^t. Morris there, late Lieu^t. Morris, who fought so well under Hull on board the *Constitution*. He is a middling sized man, plain, modest, unassuming, but intelligent. I could not but reflect on the difference between him and many of your saucy, impudent, obtruding pompous officers, who would make you believe they could conquer the world, when, poor souls, on trial, such a man as Morris, is worth an hundred of them. The people of this Country must, and I think e'er long will learn that your braggadocias are not the men to be relied on.

WASHINGTON CITY, Feb'y 17, 1813

The Chesapeake and Delaware bays are both blockaded, the former prevents vessels from Alexandria, Norfolk &c. from going to sea, the latter prevents them from going from Baltimore, New Castle & Philadelphia &c. I have a great many documents which I wish to send home, in the manner I have already sent some, if I can get time and am not too lazy. They will be uninteresting to you, I am aware, but hope they will be useful to me, as I have been trying to make a collection, and it costs me nothing but time. I wish you to lay them away safely.

WASHINGTON, Feb'y 20, 1813

Now as you may wish to know what I find to do, or rather what I have to do, I will endeavor to tell.

In the first place then I must be compelled to hear a great deal of nonsense from our, in their own opinion, wise legislators. In the next place I have got to finish the drawing of the Hall which I promised you. I have not less than two hundred letters to fold up and direct, pack up my papers and clothes and get ready to start on the fourth of March at six O'Clock in the morning as I have already paid my passage to Baltimore. Now to do all this I think will keep me pretty well employed until I start for home, and when I start I shall have enough to do to get over the bad roads as rapidly as I shall wish to.

Now that you may know where I am, if you will look on the plan of the hall I sent you, and that you may know what is going on, if you will look to the other side of the hall, you will see the name of Wright, and you may figure to yourself how he looks, as he is now addressing the Chair, with great strength of lungs, and much motion of his right arm, which when he brings it down with force, gives an additional impetus to his voice. He is talking about putting on taxes, and thinks the people will bear them. The majority are in a perfect quandry upon this subject. They want money and must have it, but then they must fear that in getting it from the people, the people will take it in dudgeon, and do what they ought long ago to have done, dismiss them from office.

WASHINGTON CITY, Feb'y 25, 1813

I enclose you a drawing of the dome over the Representatives Hall, which I have not completely finished. As it cost me some labor, you must not let the children in their desire to see it, tear it, but keep it until I return, when I will explain it to you. For altho' it is considerable handsome, in my opinion, yet it may be some like the innholders sign, intending to represent a white bear, yet it was necessary to write under it, "this is a white bear." I have nothing new to write, except that the house yesterday voted by a large majority to have a meeting of Congress on the fourth monday in May. On some accounts I do not dislike it, as it will shorten the winter session, and I had rather have two short tours, than one long one. However, it is not worth while to anticipate evil, for sufficient unto the day, is the evil thereof.

WASHINGTON CITY, Feb'y 28, 1813

You may rely upon it, that it is with very great satisfaction to myself, and I know of pleasure to you, that this week ends the second and last session of the twelfth Congress, and will leave me at liberty once more to return home, which I shall do with all possible dispatch.

I was in hopes to have received another letter from you, but do not now expect one, as I suppose you have not written me lately, either expecting your letters would not reach here before the fourth of March, or that on account of your sickness I should quit before that time. This I should have done, but was very anxious for the passage of a bill for the relief of those merchants, who brought in their goods by way of Canada, in which Mr. Salisbury was considerably interested, and which passed on Friday last. Since then I have tarried, as our mess engaged a stage and agreed to go on together.

We have had a great many Boston people on here this winter, Mr. Blake, of Worcester, was here last week, and dined with us.

We had a quaker to preach in the Hall to-day, and he performed very well, for one of that order. There were three others with him, from Pennsylvania, and I understand they came here, on a mission, to solicit the President and heads of

departments to make peace. His discourse was very much against war.

WASHINGTON, March 2, 1813

We have received information, which I think may be relied on, that Joel Barlow, our minister to France, is dead. Mr. Potter, of Rhode Island, who is a very shrewd man, observed upon this news, that he supposed Barlow had concluded a treaty offensive and defensive, between France and the United States, and gone to the Devil to get it ratified.

The opinion here also is that Bonaparte is dead. I mean among many. One reason perhaps is because they wish it. But the strong reasons are, the manner in which he is said to have arrived at Paris in the dead of the night with only one attendant, the remarks of the conservative Senate, upon crowning the young King of Rome, and the silence upon the subject by his friends here since the news of Barlow's death. We conclude that the letter which brought information concerning Barlow, would have brought information concerning Bona, and if alive, the administration would have been very desirous of making it known.

WASHINGTON, May 28, 1813

As yet we have done nothing but organize ourselves, receive the President's message, and lay the foundation for business. This morning the house met at eleven, and adjourned until Monday. Of course we have sufficient leisure. The house has improved considerably in the personal appearance of its members, and there is a great acquisition of talents, particularly on the federal side, but the majority, as I expected, is against us.

I have not yet been able to form any accurate opinion how long this Session will last, probably six or seven weeks from this time. In the President's Message I see nothing which indicates peace. For a long time I have believed they did not wish it, provided they could persuade the majority it was best to carry on the war, and could succeed in obtaining men and money.

Sunday morning, May 30, 1813

I find myself again seated in the room which I occupied last winter, and writing at the same desk, from which I have so

often written you. I have the same mess, as last winter, except in the place of Gen^l. Chittenden and Doc^t. Fitch, who do not come again, we have Mr. Pitkin and Mr. Sturgis.

Nothing of importance has transpired here since I arrived in the City. The President's Message, which you have seen, does not appear to me to indicate a wish on his part to make peace. The time, cause and objects of sending a mission to Russia, are, I fear, but little understood. There is too much juggling and management in these things; and other views, than the real interest of the country, too generally govern at head quarters.

We have a report that the affairs of Europe are taking a different turn, that even Austria has declared war against France, and that the Russians are every where successful. However strange it may appear, there is nothing, in my opinion, which disturbs the feelings of our administration more, than the ill success of the French. It checks their hopes of success, for altho' there is no formal alliance between this country and France, there is not the least doubt of a perfect understanding between them, and of a co-operation in their measures. But we have it from the authority of divine revelation, and all history is a proof of the fact, that soon or later, the Almighty will bring to naught the councils of the wicked. The little great men here, who feel as if the destinies of the nation were in their control, are but mere creatures of the day, clothed with a little brief authority, which may soon be taken from them. The most humble peasant, who has barely food to make him comfortable, but whose conscience is void of offence, enjoys a situation far more to be desired, than that of Mr. Madison, or his principal counsellors.

WASHINGTON CITY, June 2, 1813

Until this week nothing of an interesting nature has occurred in the house. On Monday Mr. Grosvenor presented the petition of George Richards, which you will see in the paper. This petition occupied the house two days, and exhibited on the part of many members of the majority, a disposition not much to their honor. Every project which they could invent was attempted to avoid granting the prayer of the petitioner, and not, at the same time, have it appear an act of partiality,

injustice and oppression. They succeeded in rejecting the petition, but their motives must be apparent.

I went yesterday after the adjournment of the house, into a school, conducted on the Lancastrian plan, and was much gratified with the mode of instruction, the neatness of the scholars, and the order which prevailed in the school. The scholars, consisting of nearly 140 are divided into a great many classes, and made to teach themselves. It will be difficult to give you a correct idea of the manner in which they are taught.

I will begin with the mode of teaching them to write. When they first begin, they are placed on a common bench seat, and before them is placed a sort of narrow table, on which is a thin coat of white sand, and over that are placed letters which they make in the sand with their fingers. They then smooth over the sand and make them over again, until they can make them tolerably well. They then have slates and pencils, and write from other copies which are placed in proper situations for them to see. The advantage of this mode is, that it saves the expense of pen and paper, and occupies no time of the instructor in setting copies and mending pens. One instructor will teach a hundred to write in this way, easier than a dozen in our school, and much quicker, he says.

In learning their letters, learning to read, also in learning grammar, arithmetic and geography, they are made to instruct each other. A class, for instance, in grammar, are called up, and ask each other questions, without any other interference of the master, than to see they are correct in their answers, &c.

The school house is in perfect order, not a seat or a desk has a cut, or a blot on it. The boys and girls are kept separate, not even allowed to walk home together. The rules for the government of the school are printed, and they are made to obey them. I think it would be well, if our schools, in point of good order, were better regulated.

WASHINGTON CITY, June 6, 1813

I went yesterday to Georgetown to attend a celebration of the Russian victories. Several reasons operated in my mind to induce me to go. The first, and perhaps the best, because I

think that every friend of this country ought to rejoice in the defeat of the French, and such a public testimonial of joy, may lead the people to examine more fully the dangers to which the ascendancy of France and Russia would expose this country. Another reason was that the government paper had said everything it could to prevent people from attending, a proof, in addition to a thousand others, that the administration are decidedly friendly to France.

Most of the federal members of the house attend, but not one of the democrats, altho' I understand the invitation was to all.

At two O'Clock the services commenced in the Meeting-house, opposite to Crawford's tavern, they consisted of Music, a prayer by Rev.^d Mr. Balch and an address by Mr. Custis. The address was short, but eloquent and pathetic. At four we dined at Crawford's, and I should judge there were not far from three hundred at the tables. After dining, and drinking three toasts, Mr. Robert G. Harper rose and proposed a toast.

Alexander, the deliverer, he observed, that fully to understand the propriety of the toast, it was necessary to take a view of the state of Europe, previous to the march of the grand French army intended for its subjugation. This he did in a masterly manner, accompanied with a concise history of the campaign, some severe animadversions on our government for declaring war, at the time Bonaparte was about to invade Russia, and the causes we had for rejoicing at the destruction of his army by the Russians. His address occupied about three quarters of an hour, but was so interesting, as not to be at all tedious, and was received by all present with very great approbation. As I expect it will be printed, I forbear giving you any further account of it. After this address I returned, without waiting for the other toasts, highly gratified that I went.

WASHINGTON CITY, June 12, 1813

There seems, at present, every appearance of a bloody campaign, and whoever has to answer for the lives which must be lost and the distresses which must be occasioned by this war, will have a heavy load of guilt to atone for.

I regret exceedingly that the frigates under the command of

Decatur have gone into New London, as the *Macedonia* is one of them, and one which was taken from the British, we are very apprehensive it will be attended with serious consequences, and that New London, in the attempt by the British to take them, may be, if it is not already destroyed. Mr. Law, one of our mess, belongs to New London and is much alarmed, his wife and family have removed with their effects, and he thinks of returning home. The democrats here rejoice that there is like to be a contest there, as they think it will enrage the people of New England against the British and make the war popular. Ought not their exertions to be turned upon those who made it?

WASHINGTON CITY, June 17, 1813

We have as yet made but little progress in the great business, for which it was said, we were to have an extra session, at this warm and busy season of the year. Indeed from all I can learn, it is now very doubtful whether the taxes will be laid this Session. If they can select some, which will go more fully to complete the destruction of the remnant of commerce which remains, they may do it, but that they will lay any taxes which will operate directly upon the people, until compelled by absolute necessity, I do not yet believe. Some scheme will therefore be devised, to postpone them, and at the same time preserve themselves as far as they can from the ridicule of the nation. If they do lay them, you must not calculate upon their rising until the latter part of July. To remain here until that time is what I shall not very cheerfully submit to, taxes or no taxes.

We were yesterday engaged on Mr. Webster's Resolutions calling on the President for further information about the Berlin Decrees. The debate was quite animated, and it is again resumed this day, and will probably be equally animated.

WASHINGTON, June 23d, 1813

I expect you begin to think, and not without reason, that I ought by this time to be able to inform you when Congress will rise. I confess I did not expect we should have been in session a month, before the tax bills should be reported to the house by the Committee of Ways & Means so that the house

could be prepared to act upon them. Such however was the fact, and until yesterday the house had not begun to discuss them. It will be a dry, tedious subject, but how long it will take I cannot tell, but I do not mean to remain here all summer, taxes or no taxes, and I some expect they will devise some expedient to postpone a part of them.

The majority certainly have many things to mortify and humble them. The President has been sick of a fever, Eppes, Chairman of Committee of Ways and Means is sick, the affair of the *Chesapeake* is settled, some of our Generals taken prisoners, and probably all our troops by this time driven out of Canada, the Senate not very manageable, and determined not to confirm the nomination of Gallatin as Minister to Russia, unless a new Secretary of the Treasury is appointed, their money about gone, and afraid to tax the people, for fear it will effect their popularity, &c.

To tell you the truth I am almost home sick, but I mean to make myself as contented as I can. I think I pay pretty dear for my six dollars a day, to be dancing attendance every day, this hot weather, in the hall, to witness the folly and madness of the men who bear rule, and be deprived of all the domestic enjoyments of my family.

WASHINGTON, June 30th, 1813

If you were to ask me what Congress have been about, altho' it might not be difficult to tell, I fear it would not give you much pleasure. To say that their measures are marked by wisdom and discretion, would be to say that which is not true. Indeed the majority in my opinion want every thing which ought to qualify them to manage the affairs of the nation at this critical juncture. They want talents, they want political information, they want a head, they want union among themselves, they want virtue, political integrity, energy, and every other qualification of able statesmen. With such men to manage the war, what are we to expect but disgrace?

Five weeks have elapsed since we met for the purpose of laying taxes, to collect a revenue barely sufficient to pay the interest of the public debt, and of twelve bills reported for that purpose, not one has yet passed even the house. Now if it

takes five weeks time to do nothing, how long will it take to pass twelve bills? Do not startle at this question, and think that I will stay here all summer and fall, for I will not. The federalists have given them no trouble about their tax bills, and some of their speakers have the candor to acknowledge it. A Mr. Duvall, a new member from Kentucky gave them a good lecture this day for their conduct. He said he was sent here to support the war, but from what he said I should judge he thought it was foolishly declared. He censured in severe terms those members who voted for war, and were now afraid to vote for taxes to carry it on, for fear it would shake their popularity. They ought to have a mark put upon them, their names ought to be handed down to posterity with infamy, and in the Kentucky stile, concluded by saying, that it would be an act of mercy purely, should the Almighty do nothing less than damn them to all eternity in the world to come.

Such is the progress we are making here, but I fondly hope the foundation is laying for a different state of things. There are men in the house of superior talents, but it would be folly for them to come out, as it would have no other effect but to unite the majority.

WASHINGTON, July 4th, 1813

This day, the anniversary of our independence, recalls to my mind, the noble spirit of our Fathers, who had the wisdom to declare, and the fortitude to maintain their independence. They were not like the men who now guide our affairs, weak, spiritless and inefficient, they did not spend their time in rash and idle debate, they acted, and tho' often in difficulty, they persevered. Indeed the contrast between those times and the present are extremely mortifying. Then there was sufficient cause for war, there was also something important to be gained, now the cause is at least doubtful, and there is nothing to be gained, but much to be lost. Then the strength, the talents and best blood of the country were in favor of the war, all these are now against it. One quality they possess in a high degree, and that of the meanest sort, a low, base cunning, calculated to deceive the people in time of peace, but I trust it will not avail in the hour of trial. They poor, contemptible

wretches, are afraid to lay taxes to support the war unless the federalists will vote with them. They are afraid of their popularity, unless they can induce federalists to join with them. This they cannot do, and it yet remains uncertain, whether any taxes will be laid this session. Had I been an advocate for war and voted for it, I would not hesitate a moment to say to the people you must pay for it, and if they did not like it, they might give me leave to stay at home. I should always wish to have my political conduct be such as to meet the approbation of my constituents, but this wish should never induce me to act directly contrary to the dictates of my conscience. Thus much for politics, I send you a paper which will give you my ideas upon this subject, as expressed to the house last winter.

WASHINGTON CITY, July 10, 1813

I have been much engaged the present week, in attending the long sessions, which are usual, as the session grows towards a close. Yesterday the bill laying duties on carriages was before the house, in which I felt considerable interest, as I thought the duty on chaises too high, and because it would fall very hard on Massachusetts. The bill is amended much in our favor, and by the amendments which we obtained, most of the chaises, which would have been liable to a tax of five dollars, will now have to pay but two. This will save Massachusetts not less than six thousand dollars, probably ten. For these amendments I claim some merit. I have also been engaged in writing a concise account of the rise, progress and present state of the tax bills.

WASHINGTON CITY, July 18, 1813

I think there is very little doubt we shall adjourn sometime next week, and as you urge me not to take leave of absence on your account, think I shall stay. The people of the City have been considerably alarmed for fear of a visit from the British, who are in considerable force down the river. The regular troops and all the militia have gone down to watch their movements, and be ready to meet them. The alarm has in a great measure subsided, as they make little progress up the river, and timely notice of their approach must be given. The

mode of war-fare they have adopted is a very perplexing and irritating one to the people in this quarter. For altho' they do not seem to try to make any very bold push, yet they keep the whole country from the mouth of the bay and the river in a constant state of alarm and uneasiness, and put them to a very great expense, in calling out the militia &c. &c. They proceed from one place to another with great deliberation, sounding the channel of the river and sometimes landing.

WASHINGTON, July 21, 1813

The more I see and know of the conduct and disposition of the President and his advisers, the more heartily do I despise them, and I solemnly believe they hate the federalists of the eastern States quite as bad as they do the British, and would crash them to the dust if they dared. They envy us, because, in consequence of our superior industry, we have more prosperity, and more strength than they, and are determined to bring us to a level with them. In attempting to do this, their measures have recoiled upon their own heads, the war bears harder on them than us, which throws them into a terrible rage. Besides, the defeat of our armies in Canada is extremely mortifying to them. The glory of the war seems to have vanished, the Senate sometimes acts independently, and all these things put together make them extremely mad. Until they adopt more just views and liberal sentiments, they cannot expect the co-operation of the minority, nor that the affairs of the country will be well managed.

However, we are never to despair of the Commonwealth, and I have often noticed, that things which at the time appear to be without remedy, are in the end productive of much good.

WASHINGTON, July 24th, 1813

The close of a Session is often selected by the administration party to force thro' the house their most obnoxious measures. They have done so this, and waited until one half of the members from the Eastern States had gone home, when a confidential message came from the President recommending, I am not at liberty to say what but the newspapers here say an *Embargo*. Two days were spent in secret session upon the message, the

second, we sat from ten until seven O'Clock, I took an opportunity, however, to slip out and get a luncheon. I tell the majority they are preparing an answer to the Massachusetts remonstrance. During the secret session the majority passed a long bill, and sent it to the Senate, it is doubtful whether they pass it, indeed had all the members of the house been present, I do not think it would have passed the house. This shews the importance of tarrying here until the close of the Session, and on the whole I am glad I have remained at my post, as I think it must be more satisfactory to my constituents, and as you observe it is probable I make more money, than I could by my business at home. This confounded secret Session has hindered us a number of days, and I feel we shall not be off until the latter end of next week.

You will no doubt hear many stories about the British intending to attack this place, but the alarm here is over, and you need not give yourself the least uneasiness on that account. I believe the majority are sick of the war, but know not how to get out of it. The Virginians have it at their doors, and feel very much provoked that Massachusetts is so quiet. Madison they say is quite testy and cross. He does not like it that his friend Gallatin has got to come back with a flea in his ear.

We have just passed a resolution in the house to adjourn on Thursday next, but are afraid the Senate will not consent until a week from Monday. I think they will however.

BALTIMORE, Saturday, Dec. 4, 1813

This is the first opportunity, although I have been a long while in getting here, that I have had an opportunity to write you. I did not start from Worcester until Saturday afternoon, and arrived at Brookfield about 10 O'C. The next day I went to Hartford, the next to Fairfield about 20 miles beyond New Haven, the next day to New York, the next day (Wednesday) I went to New Brunswick, the next (Thursday) to Philadelphia. Friday I took steam boat to New Castle, arrived there about 3 O. C. this day, have met with no accident, altho' the roads in some places, are intolerably bad. To-morrow I expect to reach Washington, when I will write you at large.

WASHINGTON CITY, Dec. 7th, 1813

We have this day had the President's message. It was much as I expected. Nothing from our envoys to Russia, affairs with France unsettled, much said of the Erie victory, little of the failure to take Montreal, and a conclusion, that upon the whole, the war brings with it more good than evil, a conclusion not warranted however by fact.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 15, 1813

The injunction of secrecy is not yet removed from the proceedings of the house last week. The Senate are now sitting with closed doors. Of course there is nothing important, as it respects Congress, which I can communicate. We have a report that Wilkinson's army is cut up by the Canadians.

I have been attending to the subject of dying cotton, wool and silk, having found a treatise on that subject, in the Library.

WASHINGTON CITY, Dec. 19, 1813

Except what has been done in secret Session, nothing of importance has occupied the attention of Congress. The prospect of the Warhawks is not very flattering. It will be extremely difficult, since the failure of Wilkinson and Hampton, and the terrible sufferings of their armies, to raise another next campaign which will be able to take Montreal. They intend the Militia shall do it, but I am convinced they never will, they will defend their altars and firesides, but go to Canada they will not, let Congress make what laws they please.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 23, 1813

Before this reaches you, you will have heard of the Embargo, and I expect it will make considerable noise. It is best to let the physic work thoroughly, or else at once throw it off by a powerful emetic, and which is most advisable is for the doctor and patient to decide.

I have taken the same room I occupied last winter, of course a description of it, and of the old bachelor like manner in which I live, will be unnecessary, and I think you will find it in one of my last winter's letters. My fellow boarders are Dana, of the Senate, Champion, Brigham, Bradbury, Ely, Law and

Mosely of the house. We are a pretty solid, sober mess, whether you take weight of character, or of body.

Excepting the Embargo, nothing of importance has been before us. The majority have not yet determined what measures to pursue, but are putting their heads together for mischief, it may perhaps recoil on their own heads.

WASHINGTON CITY, Dec. 26, 1813

We have, indeed, fallen upon evil times, and it behoves us to arm ourselves with real, republican virtues, fortitude, activity, industry, and above all with the virtues of a Christian.

An elegant likeness of Washington, in the Committee room, where I am now writing, this moment, as I cast my eyes up, attracted my attention. He is represented as standing, with a sword in his left hand, his right hand extended, and in the attitude of speaking. Altho' dumb, yet methought I could hear him say, "O, foolish Americans, what madness, what infatuation, is this, which has involved you in a ruinous and destructive war. When I unsheathed this sword, it was to secure to you the rights of self government, and enable you to establish a constitution under which you might enjoy, the blessings of liberty, civil and religious, be at peace with all the world, and become a happy and prosperous people. This object, aided by the blessings of a kind Providence, I fondly hoped I had accomplished, and cheerfully retired to the sweets of domestic life, trusting that wisdom and moderation would still prevail in the councils of the nation. How sadly have I been deceived. My enemies, the men whom I long since pronounced the enemies of the country, have triumphed, and by intrigue, by fraud and corruption, are turning my counsels into ridicule, corrupting the people, and sowing the seeds of discord and disunion. O, Americans, place no confidence in these men. Place no confidence in that President, who selects for his cabinet counsellors, one man who openly and publicly reviled my administration, another, who attempted to seduce my army to subvert the liberties of their country, another who excited an insurrection, and another whose greatest qualification was heading a mob in Philadelphia. Can you expect the smiles of heaven, while you have such men to rule over you?"

Such, and much more methought I could hear him say, but I will pursue it no farther, but console myself with the consideration, that however much the wicked may for a time triumph, the righteous must finally prevail.

WASHINGTON, Jan'y 1st, 1814

As we yesterday received the pleasing intelligence of the defeat of Bonaparte, upon which you may remember I made some calculations, and gave it as my opinion that he would be defeated, we thought it might be well to congratulate the President upon the event. It is a custom, on new year's day, for him to have a levee, at which "black spirits and white, blue spirits and grey," collect together at the palace; and, taking into consideration all circumstances, I e'en thought I would be fool enough to make one among the multitude. I accordingly went, and ther saw many great little, I mean little folks, great in their own estimation, in abundance, some Generals, some Colonels, some would be officers, members of Congress, many, like myself, who merely went to see the show, &c. &c. We were treated with punch, wine, cake and ice creams, and as the President, by his wise measures, has made all these articles very cheap, I thought I would at least have a taste of them. Upon the whole, I was tolerably well satisfied with going, as it cost me nothing, and I might not have done much had I staid away.

January 2, 1814. Having on the first day of the New-Year, commenced writing to you, it is probable I shall for some time continue it. The year is ushered in with glorious news, if true, and there is little reason to doubt it. I do not mean that I rejoice because so many thousand Frenchmen are killed, but I rejoice, that the monster Bonaparte has received another overthrow, which I am confident has put an end to that overgrown power which threatens ruin to all other nations. Let us be thankful to Almighty God, in whose hands are the destinies of nations, that, in due time, he sets at nought the councils of the wicked, and prostrates, in an instant, their ill-gotten power.

There is some talk of peace, but I have no faith in it. I should most cordially hail it, when it can be made for the good of the country.

WASHINGTON CITY, Jan'y 9, 1814

Peace by many is confidently expected before the close of the year, I hope it will prove true, but am by no means confident of it. The defeat of Bonaparte, the failure of our own arms, the pressure of taxes, the complaints of the people, the difficulty of obtaining men and money for another campaign will be strong motives for the administration for making peace. They will do it reluctantly, and with an ill grace, for they can look on nothing British without snarling.

WASHINGTON, Jan'y 15, 1814

The proceedings of [Congress] the present week have been unusually in[teresting] and have occupied nearly all of my time. The [torn] of the Turreau Letter, has caused much animated debate, and is a very sore subject to the administration party. I send you a paper containing a short statement of the proceedings of Congress in relation to it, which you can peruse and give to your Father or Brother. You will see that I took a part in the debate, and the remarks I made will probably be published. I have been requested to write them off, but do not know as I shall comply.

Yesterday, Friday, the house sat until seven O'Clock debating on the Army bill. Never was gained a more complete victory in point of reason and argument, than the minority gained over the majority. Mr. Webster made one of the best speeches I have almost ever heard here. The majority made but a feeble answer, and notwithstanding several of the minority intended to speak on the subject, they called the previous question, and [torn] stop to all further discussion. I have [torn], that precisely in proportion [to the] importance of the subject before the [torn] is the disposition of the majority to [torn] it without deliberation or discussion.

But one important point was gained yesterday, viz, an explicit avowal that the object of the army was the conquest of Canada. For this object an army of upwards of sixty thousand men is to be raised, if they can get them, and as an inducement to enlist a bounty of \$124. is to be given each soldier, who enlists for five years, or during the war. This I think is a very good explanation of the professions of the war party of

their desire of peace. They avow that they intend to conquer Canada, raise an army of sixty thousand men for five years, or during the war, and give, as inducement for enlisting an extraordinary bounty. Can the people much longer have confidence in such men?

WASHINGTON, Jan'y 16, 1814

I presume you, and people generally are anxious to know, what is the prospect of peace. I shall never, so long as the present men are in power, give a decided opinion upon so important a subject. I am satisfied myself, and think I shall e'er long be able to satisfy others, that this war was undertaken to aid France in her system of destroying G. Britain, by prohibiting all commercial intercourse between her and the other nations of the world. If France should be completely beaten in this object, as there are now good grounds for believing, and if our administration become satisfied that the war is very unpopular, and do not meet with success in getting money and men to carry it on successfully, they will make a peace, altho' they should not obtain a relinquishment of the right of search.

The British offer to treat, "upon principles of perfect reciprocity not inconsistent with the established maxims of public law, and with the maritime rights of the British empire." These terms our government perfectly well understand, but in accepting the offer say they are willing to settle, "on conditions of reciprocity, consistent with the rights of both parties, as sovereign and independent nations." But this our government may say is not consistent with "the maritime rights of the British Empire," which leaves the whole subject open for dispute between the commissioners, and our ministers will, I have no doubt, be instructed to act according to circumstances. So that he, who would probably prophecy whether we shall have peace, must prophecy also whether Bonaparte has completely failed in his projects, and also whether we can carry on a successful war against Canada. The ministers nominated are Bayard, Adams, Clay, Speaker of our house, and Jon^a. Russell. The Senate have not yet acted on the nominations. The three first will be appointed, there is some doubt about the

latter, and why they should have four I cannot conceive, unless it is that they might be equally divided.

The latter part of this letter on the subject of peace you may shew to your friends, as well as the rest, if you choose. I think I have some knowledge of the views of administration, and one great object with them is, on the subject of peace, so to conduct as to preserve their popularity. This is a great and leading object, and they will, instead of being governed by fixed principles, be governed according to circumstances.

WASHINGTON, Jan'y 19, 1814

These are no times to despond, or to indulge in ease, they require energy and exertion. I will not despair of the country, and I do still firmly believe this administration must go down. If the people of the United States can look on with complacency and place their confidence in men, who have involved the country in a party war, in debt, burdened them with taxes, and shewn, by their multiplied disasters, their incompetency to manage a war, they are greater fools than I believe them to be. How the democrats feel throughout the country I do not pretend to know, that they feel humbled, mortified, and almost discouraged here, is evident to a man of the least observation. I do not think they have arrived at the stage of repentance, or that they are yet willing to acknowledge their errors and reform. But I do think many of them sincerely wish they were fairly out of the difficulty in which they are placed.

Messrs. Bayard, Adams, Clay & Russell are confirmed by the Senate as commissioners to treat with G. Britain. I sincerely hope they will make a peace, but do not consider the prospect very flattering.

WASHINGTON, Jan'y 23, 1814

I have this day, for the first time since I have been here, heard a good sermon. Not that it is the first I have heard, for I have generally gone to meeting, but our Chaplains are miserable preachers, I mean not to say they are bad men, but their discourses are much below mediocrity. I consider it as strong an evidence of the corruption of public taste, and perhaps I might add public morals and religion, that the

Representatives of the nation should choose for Chaplains, men whose discourses, however well meant, as I believe they are, are neither calculated to be instructive or edifying. This afternoon I went to hear Mr. Mead, a young man, who formerly preached at Alexandria, but now in Virginia, and was much gratified. His language was plain, simple, neat and forcible, his manner free from affectation, but calculated to attract the attention of his audience, and his subject made more and more interesting to the close of his sermon. Such preachers I admire, and if he did not persuade me to be, he persuaded me that I ought to be a Christian, and that more real happiness is enjoyed by the Christian, than can be afforded by all the honors or riches which this world affords.

The political hemisphere is still clouded, but many think the day star of peace will make its appearance in the course of the year. It may, and I hope will be so, but if it should, it will be owing to Bonaparte's defeat, the embarrassments of the administration in carrying on the war, and not to any good will of theirs. I shall give them no credit for it, for certain I am they cannot make a better peace now, than they might have done before war was declared. Yes, after losing thousands of lives, and expending not less than an hundred millions of dollars thereby entailing on the present and future generations heavy and oppressive taxes they must stop where they began, without gaining one single point. Indeed, I should not be much surprized, if they should surrender privileges, which would make even Massachusetts people dissatisfied with peace. This may seem strange, but may prove true. I have reference to the fisheries, and the right of our fishermen to dry and cure them on lands belonging to the British. These fisheries are worth more to us, than all the Canadas, and if they should give up these privileges, we may truly say, what I once told the majority in Congress, that when we ask them for bread they give us stone, when we ask them for fish, they give us a serpent.

Monday morning, Jan'y 24. The debates during the last week were quite interesting. There is a spirit in the minority, which aided by prudence and the exercise of superior talents, never engages the majority, without in the argument discomfiting them. They are quite willing to avoid debate, and

often resort to the previous question to put a stop to it. On Saturday, however, the previous question was called for three times, but they could not get a majority to vote for it. The debate was on a bill to relieve Nantucket from the oppression of the Embargo, it was brought forward by the majority, as Nantucket is a loyal place, and what displeased the majority was an attempt to amend the bill by extending the same relief to other places similarly situated, and the debate on the subject was not much to their liking.

WASHINGTON, Jan'y 27, 1814

There is now news here, which you have not probably e'er this heard, that I however consider as highly important and interesting. The great events of Europe will have, no doubt, an effect upon the affairs of this country, I hope a beneficial one. The debates in the house, for many days past, tho' in some respects not uninteresting, have been very little confined to the subject before the house. They would have been much better adapted to a bill to authorise the members to talk about matters and things in general.

I often become tired and disgusted with the noisy, foolish, mad harangues of many of the members, and would give more for one day, to be spent in the midst of my family, than for a whole session thus spent. I however, in some degree, console myself with the hope, that I may acquire information which will enable me to be useful.

I believe that among the members of the house may be found every sort of character which belongs to the human race. We have the rash and the moderate, the wise and the foolish, the moral and the immoral, the learned and the ignorant, the humane and the savage, the benevolent and the cold-hearted, the generous and the niggardly, the real lovers of their country, and those who love much more that which gratifies their own ambition, etc.

WASHINGTON, Feb'y 1st 1814

The measure most interesting to you, as well as me, was a proposition this day made, by Mr. Macon, for the adjournment of Congress, on the seventh March next. You must not, however, be deceived, by concluding that it will be adopted, but to

use the present Court language, it authorises an expectation that Congress may be adjourned sooner than I expected when I left home. In this I sincerely hope I shall not be disappointed. I am sick of listening to so much rant and declamation, and nonsense as I am compelled to hear, which would be perfectly disgusting, were it not, for now and then, a very interesting speech from someone of the minority, which, however, the majority take much pains to prevent. I am sick of their measures, measures ruinous and destructive to the best interests of the country, and which they seem determined to pursue, at all hazards, and which they will pursue until put down by the loud voice of the country, and then, when obliged to retreat, they will endeavor to make it so as to secure their places, about which I fear they are more concerned, than about the good of their country.

WASHINGTON, Feb'y 4, 1814

On Wednesday, the most animated debate, which has taken place in the house the present session, was had, on a motion, which could not, from its intrinsic importance, have been expected. The house of delegates of Maryland had adopted a remonstrance against the war, addressed to Congress, which was presented by Mr. Goldsborough. It has always been customary to print all memorials or remonstrances, coming from Legislative bodies, whether approving or disapproving of the measures of administration. Mr. Goldsborough, after it was read, made the usual motion, in such cases, to print it. This was objected to, on account of some expressions contained [in] it, which were deemed by the majority as disrespectful. A debate commenced, which became more and more animated, for more than two hours, and in the course of which, many subjects were touched upon, with no little eloquence. In this, as in all other cases, which call forth the talents of the two parties, the palm of reason and eloquence is unquestionably borne off by the federalists, altho' the majority of votes are against them. I much doubt whether the majority would seriously dispute this assertion. Yesterday the same memorial was presented by Mr. Goldsborough, of the Senate, to that body. The same motion to print was made by him, and the

most animated discussion, took place in the Senate, which has occurred the present session. The Senate were equally divided, 15 for and 15 against printing it. In the house the motion to print was lost by a large majority.

As to the subject of Peace, it is next to impossible to form a decided opinion. The character, feelings, and political course of two, at least, of the Commissioners, and probably three, is unfavorable to Peace, upon every principle but one, that those who talk the loudest, boast most of their courage, are often the first to flinch, when real danger or trouble approaches. The bill giving a bounty of \$120- and 160 acres of land to encourage enlistments, for the purpose of raising an army of rising 60,000 men, is also unfavorable to peace, unless it was intended, as has been hinted, as a scarecrow to frighten the British to make peace, which I can hardly believe, for, if it is so difficult to raise an army, in this country, that a resort to so high a bounty is necessary, the British ministers, who are not deficient in calculations, will very naturally conclude, that the expense and difficulty, on our part, of carrying on the war, are so great, that we shall soon become tired of it.

The acceptance of the Russian mediation, I have always considered a trick, to obtain the loans for the last year, for it is a well known fact, that nothing but the prospect of peace induced the monied men to loan their money, and that Gallatin, before he sailed for Europe, assured them there would be peace.

The loan required for the present year is rising \$29,000,000, nearly double that of the last. Without a strong prospect of peace, it is morally certain, the loan will not be filled. The acceptance of the offer of the British government to treat directly, became, therefore, on the part of our administration, a matter of policy. If the government were not sincere, the course has been precisely such as was to have been expected. The party here, very well know, that the people desire peace, they very well know the effect every prospect of peace has, in keeping in check the increasing opposition to the war, the confidence which it inspires in monied men to loan their money, and the effect it will have to induce many to enlist, who otherwise would not.

Since the acceptance to treat with the British, many of the most influential war members have declared that there is no prospect of peace, and that he must be a fool who believes in it.

Many declare there shall be no peace, until the Canadas are conquered and ceded, and all the war men agree that unless the British give up the right to search our vessels for British sailors, there shall be no peace, and there is not the least reason to believe that they will. These reasons, with others, which might be noticed, induce me to consider the prospect of peace as extremely doubtful, and if we do have it, it will be in consequence of the defeat of Napoleon, the increasing opposition to the war, the failure to enlist an army, and to obtain the money necessary to carry it on.

Upon the whole, my opinion is, that the conclusion of a peace, will depend upon so many contingencies, which it is impossible to foresee, that no certain calculations ought to be made upon it. Such, however, is the hostility to G. Britain, such the desire of the party to retrieve in another campaign, the disgraces of the two last, such their determination not to give up what they have so long contended for, on the subject of impressment, and such their desire to put down commerce, and New-England in the back ground, that, I confess, I have very little hopes of a peace from the mission to Gottenburg. I shall be happy, should I be disappointed.

WASHINGTON CITY, Feb'y 12, 1814

We have been engaged in debate on the loan bill since Wednesday, and it will probably be debated the whole of next week. I have delivered my sentiments upon it, which I will send you as soon as it [is] published, which will probably be in the course of next week. I am very glad it is over, as the labor of collecting materials arranging them, etc. is not a little, and in my attention to this subject I fear I have not written to you so much as I ought, and otherwise should.

WASHINGTON, Feb'y 14, 1814

Yesterday I was engaged in attending the debates, and have been much engaged this day, but for fear this should not reach you by the mail of next week on Thursday, I have con-

cluded to finish it now, but not as I wished. The Senate have been whipped back I fear to follow, and be mere Registers of Executive will, if not, they now have, from the nominations this day made to them, a fair chance to prove their independence. G. D. Campbell is nominated to the office of Sec'y of the Treasury, Richard Rush to Attorney Gen'l and, strange to relate, Gallatin to be a fifth commissioner to make peace with G. Britain. God save the people.

WASHINGTON CITY, February 20, 1814

Ever since last week on Wednesday, not less than three hours has been spent, every day, Sunday excepted, in debating upon a motion to fill the blank in the loan bill with twenty five millions of dollars. The Committee of the whole house yesterday agreed so to fill the blank, and the Committee rose and reported it to the house. Probably two or three days will be spent in debating it in the house. There is no doubt the bill will pass. There have been many good speeches upon this occasion, but no one which better suited my taste than one delivered by Mr. Gaston yesterday. After meeting I will finish this letter.

WASHINGTON, Feb'y 20, 1814

As I took a new sheet of paper, I forgot, till I began the date, that this was but part of my letter. I have been to meeting, but have almost concluded I will never go again when our Chaplains preach, as they are very poor preachers. Since meeting, Mr. Daggett & Mr. Stockton, Col. Pickering, and Mr. Pitkin called upon us. They say it is a disgrace to the National Legislature to choose such preachers, and I fully agree with them. It is yet doubtful when Congress will rise. The House & Senate have appointed a Committee to report at what time it may be done, they have not yet reported, but it is not calculated that it will be postponed longer than the first of May, it may be sooner.

WASHINGTON, February 27, 1814

Many democrats feel alarmed at the state of things, and but for the pride of party I think would change their course. By the way, Mr. Dexter is here, and I am confidently informed has

written to Boston, declining to be the democratic candidate for Governor. He attended with the Federal members of Congress to celebrate the Birthday of Washington. This I think he would not have done, if he had considered himself a candidate for Governor.

WASHINGTON, March 12, 1814

I walked this morning to Georgetown, which is about three miles, and felt more interest in the place from its having been your residence for one winter. I presume, at that time, you little contemplated, that you would be at Leominster, taking care of your children, and your husband spending his winters so near where you once resided, or that he should be here, as anxious to return home and see you, as you then was to return and see him. I did, what I expect you will call a foolish thing at Georgetown. I purchased in company with Col. Mosely half a ticket in the 2. Class of Washington Monument Lottery. But you know, I have often told you, it is difficult to be always wise, that men will sometimes be boys. I am quite tired of sitting day after day in the Hall. If I could only run home every few days it would not seem quite so bad. There have been an unusual number of people in the city this winter, and a great many from Massachusetts. Mr. Dexter, Mr. Davis, the solicitor general, George & Francis Blake, Crowninshield of Salem, etc.

WASHINGTON March 21, 1814

I went yesterday, Sunday, in company with Col. Mosely to Alexandria. Several reasons induced me to go. One was to get out of the limits of the city of Washington, within which I have been so long confined, that it seems almost like a prison. Another was, for the benefit of exercise, which is very necessary; for of all situations, none has a greater tendency, to render a man idle and inactive, than that of being a member of Congress, in such a place as Washington. Another was to call on Mr. and Mrs. Reed, from Bolton, before I returned, and another to attend meeting, where I could hear better preaching than at Washington.

As I know of nothing which will be more interesting, I will give you an account of my tour there and back. I rose early

in the morning, shaved and dressed myself, and immediately after breakfast walked to the wharf near the Navy Yard, about a mile southeasterly of the Capitol, where the Alexandria packet lies. As there were but five passengers, the owner of the packet hesitated about going, but finally concluded, if we would pay as much more each than the usual fare, as to make him up six passengers, he would go. As this was but a trifling sum, the usual price for a passenger being twenty five cents, and the addition required being but five cents each, we readily agreed to it.

The morning was very mild, clear and pleasant, like a fine May morning, when there is not a cloud to be seen in the whole expanse of the horizon. When the packet started from the wharf, there was very little wind, and that, as the sailors say, dead ahead, that is blowing directly against us. We had not, however, been out many minutes, before the master of the packet discovered that the wind was shifting, and spread out all his sails to have the benefit of it. He had scarcely got his sails out, before the violence of the wind was such, that he was obliged to haul down his top, and reef his main sail. It blew harder and harder, and I confess, for a few minutes, I felt a little alarmed. Finding however that the wind was with us, that the master understood his business, and had got his sails secured, I felt pretty quiet, altho' the packet rocked, and bounded up and down with the waves, rather more than suited my fancy. We went, however, very rapidly, not being much more than half an hour, in sailing to Alexandria, a distance by water, of about five miles. I was not sorry when I got ashore at Alexandria, for the wind still blew very hard, and filled the air with the dust of the street, so that it was uncomfortable walking. We went to Mr. Catlett's a gentleman with whom we were acquainted, and were in good season for church. He received us very cordially, and we went with him and his wife to church, and had the honor to sit in the same pew, which was formerly owned by General Washington, and which he used to occupy, Alexandria being the place where he attended public worship. We had a very serious, moral discourse from Mr. Norris, an Episcopalian, and the singing was very good. After meeting, Mr. Catlett went with me to Mr.

Reed's, whom I found he knew, altho' he did not know where he lived, but found his house by enquiring, and walking nearly a mile. I found them in the plain New England stile, in a very comfortable house, which he informed me he rented for forty pounds a year.

Soon after meeting, instead of returning by water, we walked back to Washington, a distance, by land, of about seven and a half miles, and arrived there about half after seven in the evening. The road was very good, the wind had gone down, and I felt very little fatigue from the walk. Our friends were glad to see us safe back, for they said they felt alarmed for us, as they supposed we were in the packet, when the wind blew so hard.

Alexandria is in every respect a better place than Washington, it is a place of vastly more business, and if the country could be rid of War, Embargo, Nonintercourse, etc. would be a very thriving place.

WASHINGTON, March 25th, 1814

I have nothing new of importance to communicate, which is not contained in the newspapers. The tide of Bonaparte's sweep seems to have turned, and I believe his reign will not continue much longer, or if it does, his power will be so much curtailed, and his resources for money so much diminished, that he will no longer be that terrible monster, which he has heretofore been. His fall and that of the present administration are intimately connected, and fall they both will.

The house have been in session from eleven this morning, until this time half past five, and I have not been to dinner, and as we expect upon this vote, the Yazoo bill, to be in a small majority, I have been confined to the house almost all the time.

WASHINGTON, April 3, 1814

The reasons which induce me to think that Congress will not adjourn on the 11th as proposed, are, that the majority have become frightened with their own measures. They are seriously afraid they will not be able to obtain the 25,000,000 loan. In order to obtain it they are proposing to establish a National Bank. The President has also retraced his steps,

and recommended a repeal of the Embargo and Non-importation, and the Committee of Ways and Means have proposed an additional tax on Whiskey. Should this business be acted on, I fear it will take three weeks. This is an age of inconsistencies. The men, who would not continue the United States Bank, because it was unconstitutional, now propose to establish a new one. The President, who at the commencement of the session, recommended an Embargo, because it would prevent provisions from going to the British, now recommends the taking it off, when there is a much greater probability of its getting to them, and the party who rebelled against a Whiskey tax under Washington, now propose increasing the one they have already laid on that article. Were I confident nothing but ordinary business would be acted on, I would quit them, but these subjects are of so important a nature, that I do not like to quit, until they are decided.

WASHINGTON, April 10th, 1814

I was much pleased with the preacher this day. He was a native of Northboro', by the name of Rice, has been a missionary to the East Indies, and gave us some account of their religions, and of the progress of Christianity among them. It is so seldom that we have preaching, which can be strictly called useful, that it affords me satisfaction to notice any sermon which is. Our Chaplains, Breckenridge & Lee, I believe to be good men, but they are not of that class, who give much instruction, or whose discourses make any lasting impression. I have no news, either foreign or domestic to communicate, unless it relates to Congress, or the situation of our national affairs. As it respects the former I could give you nothing very amusing unless it would be an account of their inconsistencies, as to the latter I could say much, and if it were proper to rejoice at the difficulties and troubles of the administration, there would be pretty ample reasons for rejoicing. If reports are true, there is no little want of money, to pay the demands on the Treasury, and I have no doubt that they are liable to be called on for many millions, which it is not in their power to pay. The real truth is, that it is the want of money which has induced the President to recommend a

repeal of the non-importation, and I cannot but think, that the want of money, the change in Europe, the difficulty of enlisting men, etc. will induce him to make a peace, if possible. But upon this subject I will give you more information when I return.

Tuesday April 12th. The Embargo and non-importation are on their last legs, and I some think the war too. This has been a very important session, and if I have contributed my mite in doing good, it will always be a source of satisfaction to me.

WASHINGTON, April 15th, 1814

As the session is now fast drawing to a close, and I am making my arrangements for leaving this place of Monday next, you will not expect, I have much time to write you. I fear you have been disappointed that we did not adjourn on the eleventh inst. I confess I was, but considering what we have since done, if I can get safe home, and find you all well I shall not much regret it. The Embargo and Non-importation are gone, which will render foreign articles much cheaper, and I hope is the harbinger of peace and a new system of measures. But I am not very sanguine in my expectations of peace. If there should not be peace the administration will be very hard pushed for money, and of course for men.

NEW YORK CITY, September 24, 1814

I sent you from Worcester the first volume of the *Analectic Magazine*, thinking it might afford you and the children some amusement during my absence, and in the long winter evenings, in which I should like to have you make them read to you. The likenesses in it I wish to have carefully preserved. Another object I had in purchasing them was to get a twenty dollar bill exchanged. I enquired for the Children in the Woods, but could not find it.

About ten o'clock Thursday morning, the stage arrived at Worcester, and among the passengers to my satisfaction was Col. Pickering. We left Worcester in a few minutes, having but four passengers besides myself, and arrived at Hartford (60 miles) about nine o'clock in the evening. The next morning (yesterday) we started at the early hour of one o'clock, and

arrived in this city last evening about half after eight a distance of 110 miles, a pretty good days ride. I was not, however, much fatigued, and last night I rested finely, and feel very comfortable today, have arrived here sooner, and with less fatigue than I expected. I shall go on with Col. Pickering at four o'clock this afternoon, and ride about twenty miles, and tomorrow go to Philadelphia. There has been considerable rain since I left home, but have had the good fortune not to get wet, and my baggage has been all the way the inside of the stage.

At New Haven I had the good luck to obtain my umbrella, which has already been serviceable to me, though it looks a little weather beaten.

In the city of New York, or rather on the Island, are I understand, about 20,000 troops, mostly militia, and the fortifications are strong except in cannon and ammunitions.

As I passed through Bridgeport yesterday, I found by the collection of troops, there was a muster, many of the companies looked finely, and it was amusing to see the number of men, women, young and old, collecting to see them. For seven or eight miles after we left Bridgeport, we were continually meeting them, some in carriages, some on horseback and some of foot, going, as the old woman said, to see the stripping and straining.

It is pleasing and surprising to see the enterprise of Yankees. Mr. Gibson, who keeps the Hotel, where I put up, told me he was born at Fitchburg, that when he came to New York he had not a dollar, that he owed ten dollars for his passage, and that now he would not take as many thousands for what he has made in about seven years. I found Mr. Stephen Gibson of Boston here, who has gone on to Philadelphia, where I shall probably see him again. I understood him, he was purchasing flour, etc. to send to Boston. I thought you would be glad to hear from me, and have embraced this as the best opportunity I shall have, until my arrival at Washington, to write you.

WASHINGTON CITY, Sept 29, 1814

I arrived here the day before yesterday having had as fortunate a passage as I could have expected, and much more

expeditious. Nothing very important occurred on the way, and my progress to New York I have already given you. I left New York on Saturday afternoon at 4 o'clock and rode to Bridgeton in New Jersey that night. The next morning started for Philadelphia, arrived there about nine o'clock, where I learnt the stage for Baltimore would start at twelve, took some supper, went to bed, slept about two hours, when the servant came, and hurrayed for the stage. I got up and dressed myself somewhat reluctantly, but we had a good moon, which lasted until daylight appeared, and I arrived at Baltimore about 8 o'clock in the evening a distance of upwards of an hundred miles. There I had an opportunity to sleep until six the next morning, when I proceeded on to Washington. As I approached Baltimore, I saw where the British encamped, for one night within about two miles of the City. It is supposed the reason of their sudden retreat, which they effected without loss, was in consequence of signals given from the fleet which attacked the fort, for had the fleet silenced the fort there is little doubt but that they would have marched into Baltimore. Where the British encamped, they took the fences for fire wood, and cut up a number of large corn fields which they threw into heaps to lodge on. At New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore, there are not less I presume, than from fifteen to twenty thousand men under arms at each of those places. At Washington are from three to four thousand men. These, with the troops at Boston, on the frontiers and elsewhere would make the number of troops now under arms not much, if any short of one hundred and fifty thousand, but how to be paid, I know not, for the treasury is empty, and the Secretary has resigned. But I have not time yet to write you much, as the destruction in this place, has thrown things into much confusion, and I have had to seek new lodgings. My writing desk was broken open, and everything worth taking, carried off, not as I understand by the British, but by worthless wretches in the City, who plundered every house they could.

I have gone into a new boarding house, with most of my old mess, who reserved a room for me. When I get my room and things regulated, I shall write you more particularly.

WASHINGTON CITY, October 2, 1814

In the present distressed and perilous situation of the country, it would ill become us to regard trifles, or to murmur that we have not all the comforts and conveniences we could wish. It is to me a source of inexpressible satisfaction, that I have not been instrumental in bringing upon the country the calamities which this war has and will occasion. Indeed, situated as you are, you see but little of it, you hear of bloody battles, of houses being burnt, etc. and that is sufficient, but is not to be compared to the sight of them. This place looks melancholy enough. The walls of the two wings of the Capitol remain, but the inside is completely burnt out, and will probably be tumbling down. The house occupied by Gallatin is completely destroyed, nothing but a few of the brick walls remaining. The British passed directly by it on their entrance into the City, and being fired on from the windows ordered it destroyed. Tomlinson's hotel which stood nearer the Capitol is also completely destroyed, as is also a house occupied by Mrs. Hamilton, in which I lodged the first winter I was at Washington. This house, some say the British burnt, others, that it was burnt by the wretches who plundered it. This is the principal injury done on what is called Capitol Hill, and no injury was done on the Pennsylvania Avenue leading to the Presidential house, about a mile and a half, except the destruction of Gale's types, etc. The Presidential house, built of stone, like that of the wings of the Capitol, has its outside walls remaining, but the inside is thoroughly burnt, and much of the furniture in the house was burnt with it. The long brick buildings on each side of it, at the distance of about 20 rods, which were occupied by the different departments of government, are also thoroughly burnt. A fine rope walk, on the left of Pennsylvania Avenue, about eighty rods long, is all burnt, and both ends of the fine bridge over the Potomac are also burnt. The end on the Alexandria side by our people, that on Washington side by the British. I have not been to the Navy Yard which was burnt, nor to the fort on Greenleafs' Point which was blown up, by order from the Secretary of the Navy. The other ruins I have seen. The British officers rode about the City with as little apprehension of danger, as if they

were in their own country, and Admiral Cockburn rode alone, thro' Pennsylvania Avenue, and without pistols, stopping frequently and conversing with the citizens. A number of women gathered round and expressed fears for their safety, he told them to be quiet, they should be more safe under his administration, than that of little Jemmy's. I regret very much that the valuable library belonging to Congress was burnt, as I want the use of it. I regret also the other destruction which has been made, but not so much as I should, had not the hall of Congress been the scene of so much wickedness, had not the men in power perverted the principles of the Constitution to serve their own base purposes, and had they not made so cowardly and miserable a defence as they did.

I thought some account of the destruction in this place might gratify your curiosity, and not having any fresh news, thought it would be as satisfactory, as anything I could write. As I passed thro' Bladensburg I had an opportunity to see the road taken by the British, the positions taken by our men, and the spot where Barney had his engagement.

Congress have done nothing important. A committee is appointed to enquire into the expediency of removing the seat of government, and another into the conduct of the men entrusted with the defence of the City. No question has been taken, where my vote could have been of any consequence.

WASHINGTON CITY, Oct. 5th, 1814

The great question now before Congress is, whether we shall remove from this place, and it excites much feeling and interest among the people of the City, as well as many members. It is very doubtful how it will be finally decided in the house, from present appearances, it will be decided in favor of removal.

WASHINGTON, Oct. 10, 1814

On Saturday, Mr. Dallas a private Secretary of Gallatin, one of our envoys at Ghent, arrived in this City with important dispatches from our envoys there. A part of the dispatches were this day communicated to the house. The first was a letter of August 9, 1814 signed by Adams, Bayard, Clay and Russell, in which they state they had had an interview with the

British Commissioners, that the British commissioners stated that the points upon which they were instructed to negotiate, were the right of the British to seize their mariners from on board our merchant vessels, that Great Britain claimed the allegiance of all her natural born subjects, that the boundaries of their allies, the Indians, must be established, that the privilege of our fishing in their waters and drying the fish on their banks will not be continued without an equivalent, that the boundary line of the United States must be revised, and that we must stipulate not to keep an armed force on the lakes. These are substantially the demands of the British Commissioners, and in a letter from ours of the 19th of August they say they have no hopes of a peace. Things now look gloomy, but I confess I have now rather more hopes of peace than I have heretofore had. It was to be expected the British would be somewhat extravagant in their demands. The administration and the majority must now feel the critical situation into which they have brought the country, and as great bullies and brags are generally cowards, they will begin to flinch, and think more seriously of the necessity of obtaining peace.

I have nothing particular to write. We shall probably have to remain here through the session, tho' there is some prospect of removal.

WASHINGTON CITY, Oct. 13, 1814

There is evidently a great change in public opinion in this quarter, and the administration are daily becoming unpopular. In Maryland the election for Representatives to Congress took place and instead of three federalists, as in the present Congress, they send five to the next. The election for members in Pennsylvania took place this week. We have just heard from the district of Philadelphia, which is now represented by four democrats, and we are assured beyond doubt that four federalists are elected in their room. We calculate on other changes in Pennsylvania. The Virginians grow very sick of the war, but are unwilling to give up their dynasty, which many here call d-m- nasty. The administration are at their wits end for money, and their only resort now is to taxes, for money holders will not lend their money unless some means are provided to repay them.

WASHINGTON, Oct. 14, 1814

We have had from the President communications of letters from our envoys, and copies of their instructions in part, and there appears very little prospect of peace. I doubt whether while this administration continues there will be any, and they are daily growing unpopular, and the public are now losing, as they ought to years ago, their confidence in them, and begin to think them unqualified to manage the affairs of this nation. We have not yet agreed to remove and it is doubtful whether we do. I think we shall obtain a vote for it in the house, and it is very possible it will pass the Senate. If so I doubt whether the President will dare refuse his signature.

Sunday, Oct. 17, 1814

I have just returned from meeting, having heard a very good sermon from the Rev^d Mr. Laury, a Scotch divine, who by very great personal exertions, has established a church in this place. I also heard him last Sunday, but if I was to judge of the attention paid to religion in this place, by the numbers who attended last Sabbath, as well as this, my impressions in this respect would not be much in their favor, for altho' the days were both very pleasant, he had not more than from one to two hundred hearers on either day. It is true there are several other religious societies, and among the number are a society of Roman Catholics and another of Methodists. Religion is not the order of the day in this place. There are to be sure many religious, well disposed people, but a majority are of a very different description. Indeed it cannot be expected the morals of a people are very correct, where you see characters of all descriptions, and people of all nations and of all colors, with a variety of shades between white and black. The people of New England ought to regard it as one of their greatest blessings, that Providence, in its wrath, never cursed them with a hord of slaves. The evils resulting to the slave holding states from this class of people are numerous. It is true the large landholders, the wheat and tobacco growers, the rice & cotton planters, from the labor and sweat of their slaves accumulate fortunes. But does this compensate for the evils resulting from slavery? I answer, No. No, even

setting aside the injustice and wickedness of acquiring property by the labor of slaves, they are in other respects losers. A great plantation is a pleasant thing. But when, to cultivate it, you must be surrounded with poor negro huts, and hundreds of negroes, and to make any profit must keep them half fed and half clothed, where is the satisfaction which a generous mind can receive from the riches acquired by such means? What real satisfaction can that man feel, who lives in idleness and luxury, who rolls about in his carriage, when he reflects that he is enabled so to do, merely from the sweat of slaves, whom he keeps in ignorance, that they may not desert him, or rise upon him and assert their rights, and whom he half starves and half clothes to pamper his own Epicurean appetite, and gratify his vain ambition for splendor and shew.

But there is another very great evil resulting from slavery, which is idleness and dissipation, For it an old maxim, a maxim confirmed by long experience, that those who can live without their own personal labor or exertions, generally spend their time in those scenes of dissipation and wickedness, which not only prove injurious to themselves, but extremely mischievous to society. That slavery has produced this effect cannot be denied. There is also another very great evil incident to slavery. It is a great check upon improvement in agriculture. For, as the owners of slaves feel above attending to such subjects themselves, and the slaves have neither capacity or inclination to do it, improvements are much neglected. I have witnessed this myself. I have seen two female negroes and a male getting hay. They had a sort of cart, which at most would not admit more than six hundred of hay, with one horse to draw it. The black man was loading, and the two females pitching it on to the cart with wooden hay forks. A man and boy in New England would get in more hay, in one day, than half a dozen slaves would in a week. In many places, however, they have learnt, I understand, more wisdom. They have been supplied with proper farming tools, and are gradually beginning to use them.

Where there are many slaves there is still another and a greater evil. They render a state physically weak, and in addition to this, the owners who shamefully abuse their slaves,

are not without frequent fears that they will seize a favorable opportunity to revenge themselves for the unjust sufferings they endure, and that fear which proceeds from a consciousness of guilt, is much more to be dreaded and excites far more disagreeable sensations, than that which we suffer without any fault of our own, but which is brought upon us by the wickedness of others.

Happy for New England she has no slaves, and happier still would it be, if she had no description of people who for mere selfish and party purposes were willing themselves to become the tools and slaves of slave holders. But I trust this description of people among us are becoming more and more unpopular, that their numbers are diminishing, and that a firm and temperate course on our part will rid us e'er long of the many evils we endure.

WASHINGTON CITY, Oct. 19th, 1814

You may probably wish to know what we have been about this session, which commenced the nineteenth of last month? This may very shortly be answered, as yet we have made "much ado about nothing." What then shall we do? This may be as shortly answered, nothing which will revive the lost credit and reputation of the country. Our wicked, imbecile, visionary, time serving administration are sunk too low, ever to regain the people's confidence. The people will have to work out their own salvation, and there is no doubt, with the blessing of God, they will effect it. The most humorous thing which has occurred, is the offer of Mr. Jefferson to sell us his library. His friends represent it as a very patriotic thing on his part, but I am inclined to believe it is true, genuine democratic patriotism, mixed with a very large portion of vanity. As to the patriotism, he offers it only on condition that we take the whole. This may be a very good bargain for him, but not for Congress. His library consists of about ten thousand volumes, one half at least, of which are not written in the English language. The house have spent nearly two days in debating about the propriety of purchasing this library, and it occasioned considerable humor, as well as asperity.

WASHINGTON October 25th, 1814

I am very comfortably situated as to lodging. I have for a room mate Mr. Law, of New London, Connecticut who is a very worthy man, though a little lazy as well as myself, as you may suppose from my having written this while he is yet in bed.

I have little news. Congress are busily engaged in preparing new burdens for the people, and the time will and must come when the people will curse them.

WASHINGTON, October 27th, 1814

Presuming that an account of the proceedings of Congress will not be very amusing to you, altho' they may be, in one sense, interesting, I will attempt to give you a description of a different scene, which from motives of curiosity alone, I felt an inclination to witness. It was not a scene the tendency or natural effects of which I could approve. It was not one to which I was a spectator from a desire to encourage or countenance it. I considered myself merely as a stranger wishing to see the manners & habits of the people in this part of the country, with full liberty to approve or condemn according to the dictates of my own judgment. If I have kept you in suspense long enough to excite your curiosity, I will inform you, that the scene to which I allude, was none other than a horse race. It was on Tuesday last. The race ground is about a mile and a half back of the building in which Congress are compelled to sit, crowded so close to each other, that it is very difficult writing, or attending to business. For the benefit of exercise, and to save expense, I walked with several others to the race ground. It is a level piece of land, circular, and inclosed with a fence. Round this circle, which is one mile, is a smooth, hard road, on which the horses run. A subscription purse is made, which on this occasion, I understood was seven hundred and fifty dollars. The winning horse takes the whole. But before any horse is entitled to the purse, he must win two heats. A heat is four miles, that is, they run four times round this circle, without stopping, and the horse which comes out first, wins one heat. On this occasion five horses run for the purse, viz. Luffborough's mare, Jersey mare,

Gentle Kitty, Oscar and Noli me tangere. They ran the first heat, that is, as you will recollect, four times round the circle, making four miles. This heat was won by gentle Kitty, and was run in about eight minutes, or a mile in two minutes. Between the heats the horses rest about twenty minutes. The second heat was run in about the same space of time, and was won by the Jersey mare. The third was won by Luffborough's mare, and in this heat Oscar slipt one of his shoulder blades and was taken off of the ground, and as they allow but four heats to be run and Noli me tangere had won neither, altho' he ran well, and came out within half a rod of the winner, in one of the heats, he was taken out. The contest now was between Luffborough's mare, the Jersey mare, and gentle Kitty, each having won a heat, and this must decide it. For the fourth heat, therefore, these three only started. Much interest was excited, and among the betters much anxiety. Soon after they started it was evident that Luffborough or Jersey must win. The Jersey mare took the lead of Luffborough and kept it the three first rounds and about half the fourth, not being at any time more than a rod, seldom so much before Luffborough, but in the fourth and last round Luffborough was pushed hard and came out about half a rod first and won the purse. Gentle Kitty dropt within about sixty rods of the last round, being completely exhausted, and soon after died. Thus ended this day's race. I felt satisfied, and feel no inclination to witness another. I am glad, however, that I went, as I had heard much of the races, but never before had a correct idea of them. This is said by judges to have been a first rate race. But it is to the horses, and I should judge to the riders, unmercifully cruel. They ran in the whole, sixteen miles, four miles at a time, with an interval of about twenty minutes. In running this sixteen miles they were not more than thirty four minutes, enough to kill any horse, and I should judge unfit the riders for much exertion for some time.

There was a large concourse of people to witness the scene, of all ages, ranks, colors and conditions. But as I returned immediately after the race was over, I saw none of the confusion, drinking, gambling, etc. which I presume generally

occurs, before they all leave the ground. Upon the whole I think it an amusement of a very cruel nature to the poor beasts, and one which has a tendency to encourage many vices, and very much to corrupt the morals of the people.

I am not certain you will approve of my having attended the race, and if not, you may censure me, but not too severely. It afforded me considerable exercise, and gratified a curiosity, which I should not probably have had another opportunity of doing. Besides, to be shut up every day in a small room, with a hundred and fifty members, is not very pleasant, and it might admit of a pretty serious question, which are the greatest jockies, the Congress or the horse. Should this letter afford you, or the children any amusement, it will give me more pleasure than I derived from seeing the race.

WASHINGTON, Nov. 4, 1814

You must not be surprised, nor alarmed should you hear that the British may pay this City another visit in the course of the present month. I do not know that I can run as fast as Madison, but imagine I shall keep out of harms way. There is very little in this place that I would fight for, were it proper. And as they cannot get here without our having sufficient notice to enable us to be off, you need give yourself no uneasiness on that account. It is by no means certain that they will make the attempt, but it is not improbable.

Congress are progressing very slowly, in their endeavors to raise an army, and to furnish the means to pay it. There is no difficulty in getting an army of officers, but there is much in getting men.

WASHINGTON CITY, Nov. 7th, 1814

It has ever since I have had any concern with political life, been the constant remark that the present is an important crisis. This has to a certain extent been true, but at no period have the United States been in a more critical, perplexed situation than at present. It was foreseen that the folly, rashness and ambition of the men in power would pursue a course injurious to the best interests of the country, but it was not anticipated that they would so soon have plunged it into so many difficulties and embarrassments, that they would so

soon have destroyed public credit, and reduced the government to the verge of dissolution. I have heard it often said that the insurrection in Massachusetts was attended with many beneficial effects, tho' not intended by the insurgents. I am not sure that good may not result from this war, though not intended by its authors. One thing is very certain, that its present evils are very great, that it bears very hard upon many parts of the union, and upon none I believe harder than those who were most in favor of it. Indeed the wonderful prosperity of the country had made many giddy, infused into their minds extravagant ideas of their power. Forgetting the plain dictates of common sense regardless of moral principles, they thought no schemes too bold to be undertaken. Like the children of Israel they forgot the God who made them, and his chastening rod is now heavy upon them.

You have often seen individuals made giddy with a little prosperity, the usual consequences of which is, first extravagance and then ruin. It is much so with the administration, but I much fear the chastisement they have as yet had, has not sufficiently humbled them, and that their hearts, like Pharoah's relent only from necessity.

But amidst all this gloom we have one cheering consolation, which no earthly power can deprive us of, that it is God, and not man, who controls the destinies of nations. "All nations before him are as nothing and vanity." Let us not then at all despond, let us not fret because of evil doers, let us not complain of our situation, but let gratitude and praise ever be the language of our hearts. Thus, while we do our duty, and cheerfully put our trust in the Lord, we have little to fear from the men of this world. Long experience has taught me, that the person who thinks to pass thro' the world, and to be of any service or consequence in it, without having to encounter the shafts of malice and envy, is grossly deceived. The true course for a wise man is, not to regard them, but to place himself above them, and they soon fall harmless at his feet.

I have nothing new to write, which you do not have in the papers. It is by many here expected that the British will make another attack on Baltimore this fall, and some think

they will attempt another visit to Washington. How this may be is very uncertain. I feel no alarm for myself, but I should much regret, altho', they may deserve it, another attack on Baltimore. The conflict would be a terrible one, and the issue doubtful.

WASHINGTON, Nov. 10th, 1814

Every day's experience affords new proof of the little wisdom and virtue which governs this country, and the extreme difficulty of enlightening or reforming minds under the bias of passion or prejudice. There is indeed no reasoning with either, and until the first subsides, and the latter is removed, there is no chance for reformation. That many members of the majority have little confidence in Madison is very certain, and I am inclined to think a majority of both branches, if they had an opportunity, would vote to have him resign. I have not called upon [him] this session, and do not intend to. A man who has been the author of so many evils to his country ought to be execrated, and when I have heretofore called upon him, it has been for form's sake, and from the same motive that I went to see a horse race, namely, curiosity.

WASHINGTON, Nov. 18, 1814

I feel no regret that I am not to be a member of the next Congress, but on the contrary feel much satisfied with the determination which I made to decline. Independent of the unpleasant feelings which I experience in so long an absence from home, there are various other considerations which would make me unwilling to be a member of the next Congress. Perhaps I have not consulted my immediate pecuniary interest, but there are many other things to be attended to of no less importance.

Congress are engaged on subjects of very great importance to the nation, but I look in vain for that wisdom, that integrity and firmness necessary to free the country from its embarrassments, while the present men are in power.

A great national bank, with fifty millions of paper capital is now the mighty scheme for restoring public credit. Almost every thing is to be taxed to pay the interest of the public

debt, and an army to be raised by conscription, by forcing men into the army. These are the schemes to save the nation. They are as yet but schemes, for not a single act has yet passed upon any of these subjects, and with the aid of my vote they will not.

If they have no better means to propose for the defense of the country than these, better let the several States defend and take care of themselves.

WASHINGTON, November 23, 1814

I went last evening to Georgetown to hear Mr. Everett preach. He is a young man, son of Judge Everett of Dorchester, and settled in Brattle Church, Boston. He is a promising young man, and preached a good sermon, from this text in John, "Not as the world giveth, give I unto you."

As to Congress they have their hands full of business, but as yet have not passed a single bill of public importance. The Mammoth bank bill has occupied our attention almost a fortnight, and we seldom adjourn until four and after. I have become so familiar with dining this late, that I do not much mind it, but I always vote to adjourn.

WASHINGTON CITY, Dec. 4, 1814

I intended to have written you yesterday, but the house, altho' they had a few days before agreed to meet at ten, in order to adjourn earlier, remained in session until five. The debate yesterday was very warm, the administration were handled without mercy by King, and their acts spoken of with great freedom. This brought on a general engagement in which many hard things were said on both sides. The question was whether recruiting officers should be allowed to enlist minors without the consent of their parents, masters or guardians. The senate have passed a bill in which they allow the enlistment of minors without such consent, and yesterday when this bill was under consideration in the house, a motion was made to strike out that part of it which renders enlistment of minors binding whether they have their parents, guardians or masters consent or not. The debate was not altogether confined to the question, but almost every thing was introduced

into it. King speaking of the patriotism of the western people observed that it was a singular fact that it had become exhausted at the very time the treasury had become empty. This produced a pretty sharp reply from Sharp of Kentucky, and the debate continued with warmth, in which there were some handsome displays of argument and eloquence particularly from Webster and Grosvenor.

WASHINGTON, December 11th, 1814

I again rejoice at the return of another Sabbath, which affords me some rest from the labors of the week, and a little opportunity for retirement and reflection. The last week has been a very arduous one, and yesterday the house did not adjourn until past six o'clock. The subject which so much and earnestly engaged the attention of the house, was a bill to force out the militia, in other words, a conscription bill. It called forth much eloquence, as well as argument and reason. Mr. Webster surpassed himself, and Mr. Stockton made as sound, argumentative a speech as I ever heard.

WASHINGTON, December 14, 1814

I had intended myself to have given you some account of our Thanksgiving here, but have had no time, for I do not remember when we have for so long a time had so long sessions. It is no very easy matter even to pass laws to drag out the militia, raise armies, lay taxes on almost everything which is eat, worn, or used, and even the women are coming in for a share for we have now a bill before us for taxing among other things bonnets if worth more than a dollar fifty cents. If it is so difficult to pass laws for these things, how much more must it be to carry them into effect?

I said something about our thanksgiving. We had, for this place, and considering our absence from our families, whom we remembered, a pretty good [word omitted]. Our party was ourselves and Mr. Lovett, of New York, who was formerly a Yankee, and was invited to dine with us. We had a number of good Yankee thanksgiving songs from him, Mr. Vose and Ely who are all good singers, and among other things, we had pumpkin and mince pies.

WASHINGTON, December 18th, 1814

I intend, should I be blessed with health, in some measure to alter my course when I return, and to be more industrious and to have more method in doing business. However, it is useless to promise. I mean not, however, to set my heart on riches, for I do not find they add much to the enjoyment of the possessors, especially when fraudulently obtained. I would give very little for that wealth which is cheated out of the public, as a vast deal is and has been since the commencement of this war. Contractors, army agents, collectors, etc. are, or rather have been, making fortunes out of the public. I envy them not what they have thus obtained. They may riot on their ill-gotten gains, but a curse will follow them.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 22, 1814

We have this week been engaged in laying a land tax of six millions, and have sat every day until about sundown. How it is I am able to endure it so well, is a mystery, but believe it is owing to prudence in my mode of living. I expect as most of the tax bills have passed the house, we shall not be so much confined in future, tho' we have a mammoth bank bill from the Senate before us, which may be about as bad as taxes.

WASHINGTON, Jan'y 29th, 1815

I sometimes indulge myself in contemplating the folly of the world, quarreling, contending and fighting almost continually, and generally for they scarcely know what. The administration in this country declared war, not to obtain any thing which was to increase the comfort or happiness of the people, but to gratify their ambition, and their passions, and they are now suffering the punishment due to their rashness and wickedness, and the people also for confiding their interests to such men. What a picture of distress, of misery and wretchedness would a faithful representation of this war present. In Massachusetts the people have known little about it, and I pray to God they may not. I have myself known little about, to what others have, but have seen enough not to wish to see any more. Of the destruction in this place I gave you, soon after I arrived, something of an account. But this was but a

trifle compared with the sufferings which the army, and particularly the militia in Virginia and the southern and western states have suffered, from hard fare, want of clothing & from sickness, independent of the sufferings of those who have been wounded, and of the friends of those who have been slain in battle. But the suffering has not been confined to the soldiers and militia. The people on our extended frontiers and in all the assailable towns on the sea coast and on navigable rivers have been in a frequent state of alarm. What, for instance, must be the feelings of the inhabitants of New Orleans, with a British army within a few miles of the city. By the way, that city, by the last account, was safe on the 30th of December, and the members from that quarter think it will not be taken, altho' they are not very confident of it. The people of Georgia too are in a great state of alarm, and it would not be very strange if Savannah should be taken. In addition to all these sufferings, the people must be oppressed with burdensome taxes, and very many must suffer for the common necessaries of life. I might enlarge much upon this subject, but this is surely enough. How thankful then ought we to be, if we are permitted, to live, in the midst of so much distress and suffering, in peace, and with the means of making ourselves and those under our care comfortable.

I feel thankful that I had no hand in involving the country in this war, and in such sufferings. What are the feelings of those men who were the principal cause of it, I know not. It is not for me to judge them. But I cannot but think the vengeance of heaven will pursue those, who wickedly and wantonly cause the sacrifice of so many lives, and of so much happiness.

But notwithstanding all these evils I do not despair of some good resulting from them. If, as we have reason to believe, national calamities are inflicted by the Almighty as punishments for national sins, there is some reason to hope they will produce national reformation. I sincerely hope this may be the case, and that we may yet be a happy and a prosperous nation.

WASHINGTON, February 1st, 1815

Next month, by the blessing of God, I hope to be at home. I feel much rejoiced that so much of the session has elapsed but I mean not to be too anxious, for time passes rapidly away, altho' at present it may seem very long and tedious to us. For ten, and I think twelve days past, the cold has been for this climate, very severe. So severe, that it has scarcely been known to thaw, except a little on the south side of buildings.

Thursday Feb'y 2, 1815. I wrote the above yesterday at the Hall, but got engaged and was obliged to put it in my pocket, intending to finish it last evening. But Mr. Duvall of Kentucky came in to see us, and amused us with accounts of that country, and of their expeditions against Indians until it was too late to think of finishing it. He said he and his men, about a hundred, lived for 17 days on two ears of corn each a day, and altho' it was winter and snow a foot deep, they were almost naked, having worn out their clothes.

I was not certain but it was your wish I should return before the close of the session, and if it is I should get leave of absence, tho' I wish to see the end of this session, and consider if of considerable importance that the federal members should remain here. We have in many things been successful, and have considerably broken in upon the democratic ranks. The old Clerk, finding he would be turned out, resigned, and his successor was chosen by the federalists, with the aid of a few democrats, if they can be so called. It is quite a question, whether Madison has a majority in the house, or Senate.

WASHINGTON, Feb'y 4, 1815

We have this morning received letters from New Orleans giving an account of a battle there on the eighth of Jan'y which seems almost incredible, altho' I believe with some allowance, it is true. The British it seems made a desperate attack on the lines and entrenchments of our army about day break and were repulsed with very great loss. Gen'l. Jackson's official account makes the loss of the British 700 killed, 1400 wounded, and 600 prisoners, and what is most surprising our loss 7 killed and 9 wounded. I have seen a letter to one of the members from his brother, residing in New Orleans, which

gives nearly the same statement, but does not make the loss of the British quite so large. Unless the British should ascend the Mississippi with their ships, New Orleans may be considered as safe for the present. The letters from there were up to the 13th of January, and state that the armies had remained quiet from the battle on the eighth to that time. This is the substance of the news, you will probably have it more particularly in the papers.

WASHINGTON, Feb'y 5th, 1815

Nothing can with certainty be calculated upon in this world in relation to the future affairs or situation of nations or individuals. They all have their ups and downs. There is no such thing as a nation always remaining in peace, or always having good rulers. Prosperity, for any length of time, as was the case with the United States, is apt to make them giddy, proud and vain. It is much so with individuals, and both, in grasping for too much, often loose nearly all.

Our democrats elated with a little brief authority thought themselves the greatest and wisest men in the world, and American the most free, powerful and enlightened country on earth. They have found themselves wofully mistaken, and I believe the greater part of them would now be as glad to have peace, as they were earnest to have war, although they have not, and cannot expect to obtain a single object for which they went to war. There can be no doubt that all these things will be overruled by Providence for good, and altho' we may and ought to regret the miseries and calamities which war brings upon the country, we should not murmur or repine.

WASHINGTON, Feb'y 14, 1815

We had an uncommon meeting this morning in the house. News, not official, arrived late yesterday, that the preliminaries of peace between this Country and Great Britain were signed on the twenty fourth of December. It comes in such a form, and with such facts to support it, that it is generally believed, and all was hurly burly, congratulation and joy in the house. Very few, whose countenances as well as words did not prove the sincerity of their joy. It is probably that a few days,

perhaps this, will put it out of all question. The news came in good time, as the Senate sent us another monstrous bank bill, which we were yesterday engaged upon, and which, but for this news would probably have passed. It was in consequence laid on the table, and if the news, be true, it will not pass. I shall not finish this until the mail arrives, which will, I hope, confirm the news of peace, so that I can with certainty congratulate you and your friends on the subject. It will afford me much pleasure to have weathered the storm.

The mail has arrived, and I can now I think with safety congratulate you with the prospect of peace. The news is that the preliminaries of peace are signed and ratified by the Prince Regent, of course only wait [sic] the ratification of our government, which cannot be doubted.

WASHINGTON, Feb'y 26th, 1815

This week, I can now say, must close this session of Congress, and free me from political life. In looking back to the time when I first came to this place, it seems almost like a dream, and I can hardly realize that I have been here so long. All the events which have happened, seem to present themselves to my mind at a single glance, and to be concentrated in the present moment. The many hours, days and months of anxiety I have passed here seem to be forgotten in looking forward to the time of my return to those from whom it is so painful and unpleasant to be absent.

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