

Washington Dec 17 -

Dear Parents Last night I was for the first time, at the President's levee. There was to me an agreeable novelty in the whole scene which made me forget all that uneasiness that I always feel in full companies, and three hours slipped away without my taking any note of their passage.

On your first entrance into the saloon, you are carried up to the President and introduced. When Mr President says, in words cold as winds from icebergs, how do you do? When did you arrive? How are you pleased with Washington? This is all. But this is not all the thoughts that start up in the mind of him who undergoes an introduction to J. Q. Adams. He turns from him with a feeling little short of hatred. He sees that the man has no common feeling with his fellows. That he is cold, selfish, and calculating - That nature has given him a heart as ugly as the uncouth frame in which it is set. The prints of Adams' face are no likenesses. They have too great & good a look. But they say he has in appearance changed much within a few years. He is now almost a skeleton, and there is a kind of demoniac haggardness about his countenance, which tells me the bad opinion I had formed of his character, from reading the history of his political life, was nearly correct. If at all erroneous it erred only on the side that his friends would like to be the worse for. Mrs Adams is as ill looking as her husband. They say the dear woman went into hystericks at the news of Jackson's election. I hope I have not violated the rights of hospitality in thus speaking of Mr Adams. I have certainly restrained my feelings considerably, and think I have been very moderate.

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Date: Dec. 17, 1828
Description: George Pierce on meeting President J.Q. Adams

In an other part of the room stood Henry Clay; surrounded by a crowd whose happy countenances contrasted strangely with the air of disgust which pervaded the narrow and thin circle within which the chief magistrate displayed his gravity looks and dumpy figure. Mr Sprague offered to introduce me to Mr Clay, and after some difficulty we reached the spot where he stood. I was no less disappointed in Clay than in Adams, only in the former my impressions were more agreeable in the latter less, than I had anticipated. Mr Clay is a thin spare figure six feet three, perhaps, perfectly erect and if not graceful it is very imposing. His outward look has in it less of the genteel, more of the backwoodsman cast, than you would expect to find in one who has figured in the highest courts of Europe. But this little disappointment flies the moment he begins to address you. There is something so kind, so openhearted, so downright good in Clays manner, that I had not spoken with him two minutes before I felt my heart yearning towards him, as toward the parents of my infancy, or the dearest friend of my youth. If Mr Clay is a villain, he is a most finished one. If he is a ~~de~~ devil, he is a sweet & smiling one and I would sooner give him my hand, and clasp him to my bosom than many of those sour faced & stiff rumped Saints who pass for angels of purity. Mr Sprague observed that I was travelling over the U. S. with a view to find a favourable place to settle in the profession of law. "What! said Mr Clay, "travelling to find a place? Now my young friend I once thought like you, that it was of great importance where one began. But this is a mistake; no matter where you begin, at Portland or New Orleans, at Baltimore or St Louis. Only go where business is to be done. Then resolve that you will rise. Be in your office early & leave it late. There is but one end & one chance in such a course, and that is just what a young man like you are desiring - distinction - eminence!" This and many other kind things Mr Clay was pleased to say, and when we were crowded away by others, he told me to come to his house at any time while I was in the City, and bid Mr Sprague

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fetch me there his next free night, which is next wednesday. As you will perceive I am quite taken with Clay. Indeed he is much the most of a gentleman of any one I have seen here. He is said he will be one of the candidates for the next caucuss. He will really grieve my heart to blackguard him at caucuss and in the newspapers. But providence calls us to the performance of many unpleasant duties and it becomes us not at all to repine at its decrees. I saw no one else at the Presidents that interested me a fig. The ladies were most intolerable homely. There are really more beautiful girls in Baldwin than there were at the levee last night. Nor are the southern women generally to be compared to the northern ladies in good looks.

On tuesday I dined with Capt Alex- Wadsworth. His wife must too unwell to ~~come~~ leave her chamber. I admire the Capt very much. He has exerted him self to show me all the sights of the City & introduced me to several very pleasant young gentlemen.

Dec. 14.

The endless speech making of last winter left much buisness unattended to, the consequence is, that this session must be spent in bu[wax smudge]ness. Hence I shall probably hear little debate. This I regret, as nothing [page torn] more tedious than attending the houses, to hear the Ayes & Nays upon [wax smudge]puted questions. I have not heard any one, as yet, speak for a longer time than 40 minutes. But I have heard a few words from most of the distinguished speakers, and must confess I am disappointed. They are much less eloquent than I had anticipated. I have heard as good speaking in our legislature as has yet presented itself to me in Congress.

I presume you are anxious to know what my detirmination is relative to settlement. Indeed I can hardly say. But my present intention is to start west in a week or so, and make up my mind from actual observation. If I can get admitted in Kentucky, as there is no doubt I can, I shall ex officio be admitted to the Bar in St. Louis, and also if I should return, to the Com. Pleas in our State. The journey will be a benifit and not more expensive than boarding here. —

Do write me soon, I am very anxious to hear from you. If I omit anything about which you wish to be informed do tell me & I will do my utmost to gratify your curiosity. Perhaps there is some individuals you would like to have me discribe. Name them and I will do my best.

I am your affectionate son George W. Pierce

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