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PRINCETON IN 1801.

In the spring of 1801 I passed through Princeton, on my way to New England, where I spent the summer. One object of my visit was to become acquainted with the flourishing colleges of the northern and eastern States; as many of the commencements as possible were therefore embraced in the tour. The failure of a horse in some degree frustrated the plan.

At Harvard, I had the pleasure of being introduced to President Willard, Professors Tappan, Pearson, and others. I was also able to attend the commencement at Dartmouth College. In passing from Massachusetts over the mountains of New Hampshire, I lodged within a few rods of the house of a farmer, the father of the Honourable Daniel Webster. The old gentleman came over to the tavern in the morning, and chatted for half an hour. Among other things he said that he had a son at Dartmouth, who was about to take his bachelor's degree. The father was large in frame, high-breasted and broad-shouldered, and, like his son, had heavy eyebrows. He was an affable man, of sound sense and considerable information, and expressed a wish that I might be

it was that induced the Six Nations, in Convention at Fort Stanwix in 1769, to confer upon New Jersey the title of the "*Great Doer of Justice*," and which prompted the venerable Delaware Chief, Bartholomew Calvin, in an address made to the Legislature of the State in 1832, to say, "*Not a drop of our blood have you spilled in battle—not an acre of our land have you taken but by our consent;*" and to declare that "nothing save benizens" could fall upon our State from the lips of a Lenni Lennapi. We hope to see the history of New Jersey written, and we know no one who could better discharge that duty than the accomplished author of the "Provincial Courts."

A PRIVATE LETTER FROM A PUBLIC LETTER-
WRITER.

SMITHVILLE, March 20, 1850.

MY DEAR GENERAL,

I sit down at once to answer your inquiries with respect to our profession and your prospect of succeeding in it. To a stranger, I should write with more reserve; but your generous assistance in procuring me a situation, first as a bar-keeper, then as a school-master, then as an itinerant lecturer, and lastly as an editor, gives you a claim to share in all the knowledge and experience that I have been enabled, partly by your friendship, to acquire. I begin then by saying with all candour, that the trade is at present rather overstocked; but I lose no time in adding, that in this, as in the other liberal professions, there are blanks and prizes, so that the number of competitors does not destroy the chances of success in any single case. I know of several country papers, which would be delighted to obtain a cheap but taking correspondent. Among these are the *Talented American* and *Semi-weekly Advertiser*, of Thompsonburg, the *Farm-*

er's and Mechanic's Journal and Independent Morning Star and Telegraph of Springfield, and the Weekly Washingtonian of New Washington. Having been connected with them all, in the way of my profession, I can take the liberty of recommending you to either, unless something better should present itself. In the mean time let me give you a few hints derived from my experience and needed to correct certain errors into which I perceive that you have fallen. You are right in supposing that your letters, in order to succeed, must be dated from Washington or one of the great cities or from foreign parts. But you are greatly mistaken in believing that they must be written there, and that your personal presence at any of those points is therefore indispensable. I could easily show you, as to all of them, that no such thing is requisite, though perfectly allowable, and on the whole desirable, if quite convenient. For the present I confine myself to Washington City, as confessedly the greatest focus of epistolary commerce in the country. If in reference to this grand centre, I can satisfy you that the supposed necessity of being there in propria persona is a mere chimera, you will certainly dispense with any proof as to the others. This I propose to accomplish not by reasoning, but by simply stating a few facts and laying down a few rules furnished by my own experience. In the first place, then, I beg leave to inform you, that my letters from Washington, six years ago, to the Bonfire and Beacon Light of Tyler City, those to the Register and Plough Boy two years later, and the series published last year in the Washingtonian, of which you are pleased to speak in terms so flattering, were all composed in this good town (I should say city) of South Smithville, at the very table where I am inditing this epistle. Do you ask how this is possible? I answer by propounding my first rule, which is as follows. Take the latest telegraphic news of which you can obtain possession and put it into an epistolary form, with date and signature and postscript of the most authentic fashion. The cheapest and best stuffing, to impart

the necessary bulk, is composed of two ingredients. One of these is epithets, applied to speakers, speeches, bills, resolutions, messages, measures, administrations, and whatever else you chance to introduce as themes or topics. These epithets, if properly put down, will keep for several seasons, and indeed until the fashion in slang-phrases changes, and even then you would only have to drop one or two, retaining all the rest until the next change. There are some indeed which have remained in vogue since I began to practise, such as "chaste," "splendid," "luminous," "talented," "thrilling," together with some doublets, such as "frank and fearless," and a dozen more which I have neither time to recollect nor room to record. The other ingredient in this cheap and wholesome stuffing is quotation, which can be had at any shop, or indeed on any shelf, where a half of an old Shakespeare happens to be lying, or still better at a theatre, if you are living near one, as you then can get the fresh pure slang of all the modern plays, without the trouble of opening a book, and free from the musty flavour of old writers. On another occasion, it will give me pleasure to exhibit my own stock of cured and smoke-dried scraps and, if you please, to share it with you. But at present, I must hasten to propound my second rule or recipe which, besides being valuable in itself, will greatly enhance the effect of the first, by adding without labour to the bulk of your production. The second rule is, to take sides as a thorough-going partisan, so as not only to express an opinion of your own upon the merits of all questions, but to characterize speeches and debates, in every case, on party grounds. Never even seem to admit for a moment, that a speaker on the other side can have a ray of common sense or a particle of information. Such concessions may be well enough in England, and for lumbering affairs like the Times or Daily News; but they will not do for us. You need not think of joining our fraternity unless you can persuade yourself to act upon the maxim, that the men upon the right side (as you think it) always write

best, speak best, and behave best, in deliberative bodies. This will save you an immensity of trouble in discriminating and distinguishing, according to the actual performances in every individual case, to do which with success would indeed require you to be actually present. But by following this simple rule, I can sit here in my office at Smithville, and without a possibility of error, give an accurate account of every speech, as to argument and eloquence, and even as to its effect upon the looks and deportment of the audience. Here too it will be found economical to keep on hand a good assortment of preserved or pickled phrases, in two different parcels, for the use of the two parties. If the name of a speaker on your own side is transmitted by the telegraph, sit down quickly and describe his speech, not by its contents, which cannot yet be known to you, but by its general qualities, inferred from the political position of the speaker. Such a speech may be always safely eulogized as luminous, and logical, and chaste, and all that, while a speech from the opposite direction may be no less safely blackballed in advance, as empty, incoherent, and declamatory. If however you have reason to suspect that its logic bore down rather hard upon your own side of the question, you had better speak of it beforehand as "most scurrilous." The favourite term in our peculiar dialect for unanswerable reasoning on the other side is "ribaldry." So too with respect to the effect produced upon the spot. You need not wait for the Washington papers to inform you, that a speech from your own side of the question always makes the adverse party, and especially the adverse speaker, "quail," and may therefore with advantage be described as "scathing," "withering," and what not. These descriptions, it is true, may seem astounding or ridiculous to those who were present at the scene you have thus described. They may laugh or wonder when they read that a member, who perhaps was absent, or absorbed in a newspaper with his feet upon his desk, during the utterance of a certain speech, had turned pale, trembled, or

in short had "quailed" at its delivery; or that a bit of twaddle, which had passed unnoticed at the time of its enunciation, was felt by one half of the hearers or non-hearers to be "withering" &c. But then your letters, as you well know, will be written not for the use of Congress but for "news into the country," and the only caution necessary will be to avoid such a vast accumulation of these witherings and quailings, upon any one occasion, as might seem to leave the house a desolation and its members in the last stage of paralysis. The only other rule that I shall lay down in this letter is, that you must keep up with the boldest and least scrupulous of your contemporaries in professing to be deep in the confidence of all the notabilities, both foreign and domestic. It will never do to hesitate or doubt as to the views or motives or intentions of the cabinet, the party-leaders, or the diplomatic corps, or any individual of either class, whose movements may be at the moment objects of interest or curiosity. The mistakes you will inevitably make are nothing to the life which these disclosures will impart to your communications and the éclat which you will acquire by a few successful guesses, even though outnumbered, ten to one, by the most atrocious blunders. Of these the only safe corrective is to let them alone, and never upon any pretext to retract, explain, or qualify, however slightly, what you have once distinctly said, however falsely. These very crude suggestions, gathered wholly from my own experience, are entirely at your service, my dear General, and can easily be multiplied, if you desire it, in a subsequent communication. In the mean time allow me to assure you with what pleasure I shall welcome your accession to the ancient and honourable brotherhood of Letter Writers. Do not scruple, I entreat you, to command my services, if you should need them, as a referee or signer of certificates, attesting your capacity or previous achievements, as a talented, chaste, luminous, and splendid writer, before whose performances the whole world (on the other side) may be expected, first to quail, and then to wither.