

Washington 14 Jan. 1829

My dear son

I received your letter of the 2^d instant. I am glad that you are undecayed in regard to the opinion which you supposed me to entertain of your capacity. I never thought unfavorably of it. I have always believed that with such application to study as you have made, continued for a sufficient length of time, you could rise to eminence in any of the professions. I never wished you to continue in the Army, unless you should find it the most congenial pursuit. If I could realize my wishes concerning you, one of the first of them would be to see you a distinguished member of the Bar. You know that I always thought that, so far from its being too late, it would be the proper time, for you to commence the study, ^{of law,} after you had finished your course at West Point. And that the recommendation of your taking that course was that you would be then qualified for any of the walks of life. You, at first, were ~~averse~~ ^{propensity} to going to West Point, fearing, as you did, that you could not afterwards adopt any other line of life than that of the Army. But your repugnance to the Point has been gradually overcome, and in the end you will, I am fully persuaded, rejoice that you have taken my advice, and find too that you are able to study the law exactly at the best period of your life. If I were to say at what ~~period~~ ^{age} a young gentleman had better commence the study, I should specify twenty, which will be yours when your course at the Point shall be completed.

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