

West Point Dec 27th 1830

My dear Father

I have just learned with certainty by your letter that you & my mother are going to New Orleans. You will find there such a reunion of friends & relations, that I am sure you cannot fail to spend a very agreeable winter. Would that I formed one of your party; but next to enjoying your society myself, is the pleasure I feel in knowing that you are re-established in health & spirits and surrounded by your friends.

You desire me to continue in the course of conduct which I have hitherto pursued. You need not fear, my father, any relapse on my part into habits of dissipation for I have never yet discovered the boasted charms of the vice of the profligate. In regard to study, an object has presented itself to my view & I eagerly pursue it. My perseverance and assiduity in this pursuit may perhaps be to my prejudice in others, but still I am willing to give up excellence in every other department of knowledge, to attain an honorable rank as a speaker. I am well aware that a general acquaintance with the whole circle of arts & sciences & in fact with every branch of human knowledge is indispensable to the accomplished orator; and this I shall endeavor to acquire without weakening or confusing my mind by too abstracted an attention to minutiae