

West Point

Nov. 15th 1830

My dear Father

I am really distressed & mortified at the account which you give of my brothers. I had hoped that they had long since reformed; and I am now so much surprised & disappointed that I know not what expectations to form of the future. I cannot conceive what attractions dissipation and its votaries can offer to men of enlightened intellects, when the pursuits of the refined & liberal studies lay open before them. However many of the brilliant characters that history displays have torn themselves from the haunts of pleasure and folly, to live in the memory of mankind: and Plutarch even thinks that real greatness must be in a measure the work of previous folly & experience; or as he has it, that the truly great man must have undergone numerous changes & fermentations, like good wine in its process of purification. This, I confess, is weak, & in its general application, fallacious reasoning, still it furnishes a slight foundation for a hope that Theodore & Tom may yet change their course of life and apply their talents to their appropriate uses.

I rejoice with you that there is a prospect of Annie's living near Oakland. I am extremely anxious that Mr. Erwin's purchase may not be defeated.

I am happy to learn that Mr. Claiborn is member of the Legislature from New Orleans. He has always had my esteem and I have desired nothing more than his success in his enterprises.

You have no doubt heard the unfavorable result of the New York elections I shall not therefore mention them.