

Paris. Dec. 7th 1824.

My dear Pierre,

I have long intended to answer your letter; but I am so much occupied at one time and interrupted at another that I am compelled to be a very irregular correspondent. I have been much gratified by the good accounts I hear of you from ~~various~~ various quarters and have been pleased with the little personal note which you put me; which gave proof of very promising talent. I am very anxious to find you venturing into print as early as you can, as I consider it extremely disadvantageous. I would have you study epidemically for several years to come, without suffering yourself, either by your own inclination, or the suggestion of your friends, to be persuaded to commit the meanest trifle to the press. Let me impress this most earnestly upon you. I speak from observation & experience, as to the pernicious effects of early publishing. It begets an eagerness to reap before one has sown. It produces too often an indisposition to further study and ~~and~~ a restless craving after popular applause. There is nothing that a very young man can write that will not be full of faults and errors, and when once printed they remain to cause him chagrin & self reproach

in his after years. The article you wrote in the personal
work for instance was very clear as to composition, and
was all that could be expected from a writer of your age -
but then you showed yourself ignorant of music though you
undertook to criticize a musical performance; at a refer-
ence you would not have committed this error. The compe-
tition you were ridiculing must have been one of the
best pieces of production of Handel or Haydn: and the
performer whose performance you remark so extravagantly
must have been the leader of the band: who by look and
sign has to regulate the performance of the whole band:
keep them all in time and ~~from~~ ^{direct} their style of playing,
according to the expression of the music. I mention this
only to let you see how readily one is betrayed into
error by writing or rather publishing at an early and
unimpaired age.

I hope however, your literary career has but been a
transient one and that you are preparing to establish
your fortune and reputation on a better basis than the
literary success. I hope none of them above interests &
happiness in our time will be induced to follow my
footsteps and wander into the hazardous but treacherous
paths of literature. There is nothing more precarious
in its profits and fallacious in its enjoyments than
that of an author. I speak from an experience which
may be considered a fair sample of persons and; and

I aimed earnestly to persuade all those with whom my
words had any effect, from trusting their fortune to the pen.
For my part I look forward with anticipation to the time,
when a moderate competency will place me above the
necessity of writing for the press. I have long since discovered
that it is indeed "vanity & vexation of spirit."

I trust you will take a wider & more course. If you
have entered upon the ~~study~~ ^{profession} of the law fit yourself for the
exercise of it by profound and extensive study: do not
rest satisfied with the mere technicalities of it; but
enter widely into the whole studies connected with it.
Discipline yourself well: consider what you have learnt
at college as merely preparatory to a wider range of
inquiry. Make yourself an excellent scholar,
and store your mind with general; yet accurately
secured and well digested information. Do not meddle
much with works of the imagination. Your imagination
must be feeding, and it is a mental quality that always
later can of itself, and is too apt to interfere with the
rest of them. Strengthen your judgment; cultivate
habits of close and thinking; and make your reading
all knowledge be the great object.

I feel myself called upon to urge these matters; because
from ~~about~~ your own papers in your letter it would seem
that your late writing of mine had caught your fancy &
anchored ~~to~~ a desire to follow my footsteps. If you
think my path was but a flowing one you are

greatly mistaken - it has too often lain among thousands
5 branches of the darkness by care and despondency.
Many & many a time have I regretted that at any early
outlet in life I had not been imperiously bound down to some
regular & useful mode of life and been thoroughly inured
to habits of industry & there a thousand times regretted
with bitterness that ever I was led away by my
imagination. Behold me this man who even his mind
by the force of his long acts often a sadder moral
lower course, than he who procures it by the labour
of his hands.

I wish to impress these matters upon you because
you are the eldest of your father's family. The eldest son
should consider himself the second father of the family.
I am anxious to hear of your making a valuable practical
man of business: whatever profession or mode of life you adopt -
and that by your example and your attentions you may
guide and instruct your brothers. Our country is a
glorious one for ~~an~~ merit to make its way in: and
wherever talents are properly ~~encouraged~~ and are
supported by honourable principles and amiable manners,
they are sure to succeed. As for the talk about ~~most~~
modest merit being neglected, it is too often a coat, by
which modest & unworldly men seek to lay the ~~load~~
~~of the~~ ~~on~~ ~~the~~ ~~shoulders~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~world~~ ~~of~~ ~~success~~ ~~at~~ ~~the~~
door of the public. Modest merit is too apt to be

eraction, a nephew, or ^{an} instructed man. Well matured and well disciplined talent is always more of a market, provides it exerts itself: but ~~even then~~ it must not ~~be~~ cover at home & expect to be sought for. There is a good deal of cant too in the whining about the success of forward & impudent men, while men of retiring worth are passed over with neglect. But it happens often that these forward men have that valuable quality of promptness, and activity, without which worth is a mere inoperative property. A barking dog is often more useful than a sleeping lion. Endeavour to make your talents convertible to ready use, prompt for the occasion, and adapted to the ordinary purposes of life - cultivate strength rather than gracefulness - in our country it is the useful not the ornamented that is in demand.

I will now advert to another thing which is very near
 to my heart and a constant ~~to~~ cause of solicitude -
 There is a large family connexion of yrs growing up. I
 wish to urge the cultivation of a common union of interest
 and affection among you. The good of one should be consid-
 ered the good of the whole. You should stand by each other in
 and I did; "in evil report & in good report" discarding
 every petty spirit of jealousy; promoting each others
 happiness and building up each others prosperity. In this
 way you may contribute wonderfully to each others

reputability & success in life. Inducement also to
make the name you bear, one that shall be
synonymous with honor, purity & perfect faith.
Whatever be your dealings, public or private, let no
temporary ~~interest~~ or advantage, however flattering
utter you away from the strict line of open probity.
Known great the immediate sacrifice, frank and
open truth always gains in the end.

I shall wish also to write to you further by
the present opportunity. indeed I have nothing particular
to communicate to you. Let us hear from you again
my dear Pierre & let us all about your studies and
pursuits, and about your brother, and cousins
Give my best love to the family and believe me
ever your affectionate uncle

Washington Irving

Jan²⁷

Mr Pierre Irving

Care of E Irving Esq.

New York.

Per Le Howard

1675 vk
1104 ck



Washington Irving Esq. Dec 1844