

Washington City 21 December 1821

Dear Sir/

It was very gratifying to me to have received a letter from you. I can with all my heart reciprocate towards you the expressions of friendship which it contained. Although the intervention of unfortunate circumstances ^{may} have prevented me from enjoying as much of the pleasure & profit of your society as I could have desired yet my intention before I came to Washington ^{to send you} all the public documents which I thought would be interesting to you & I shall continue to do so until the end of the session. It is probable you may find them worth preserving as it is now difficult even here to obtain those which were printed but a few years ago.

Upon becoming acquainted with the members & hearing several of them speak I was forcibly struck with the idea that the reputation of many of them stands higher than it deserves. Several gentlemen who appear to great advantage in the debates published receive no attention from the members. They speak for their constituents & not to enlighten their audience. Indeed this matter seems to be so perfectly understood that they proceed with the most perfect deliberation & composure although they must see & know that they are not able to command any attention. With respect to many of them if the members were even disposed to listen they could not hear. It requires great compass of voice to fill the hall. It is a very magnificent & very elegant chamber, but unless a man has Stentorian lungs he cannot be heard distinctly. The voice of Mr. Coulden ^{for instance} whom you have no doubt heard speak is so weak that his usefulness on that account will be in a great degree lost.

Mr. Randolph's shrill sharp effeminate voice is imminently calculated for the chamber of the H. R. He is indeed an extraordinary man in his way. When he rises to speak he commands the most profound attention. He is not very argumentative but there is more severity & point both in his matter & in his manner than can be conceived by any person who has never had an opportunity of hearing him. He is perfect master of language & always used the very best work to convey his idea. It is said by those who are intimately acquainted with him that he is perfectly rational this winter and from my own observation ~~he~~ I have no doubt that is the fact. He is great in demolishing but not in building up & I have little doubt that if he now stood at the head of a powerful opposition as he did in the days of John Adams & had an opportunity of attacking such serious measures as were then adopted his character as a politician would be placed nearly on the same level which it then occupied. At present it is said he is [??] genius & attacks indiscriminately both friend and foe.

I have twice attempted to speak & each time received a tolerable share of attention which was a very good degree I attributed to the curiosity of the members had on both occasions. I felt myself much embarrassed. I am told however that I can be distinctly heard.

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The first business of general importance on which we shall act will be the Bankrupt bill. Upon this subject I have not yet made up my mind but would therefore afford me much satisfaction to hear your opinion. Your memory can recal [sic] the effects of the last Bill on society & as a politician I can not [sic] dispose ^{readily} to abandon the lessons of experience for any fanciful theories however plausible. Whilst on the one hand I would desire to relieve the many honest & unfortunate individuals who are now suffering under the [?] of debts which they will never be able to discharge; on the other I fear that the [?] of a Bankrupt law might again encourage that spirit of unbounded speculation which as occasioned the very evils it proposes to remedy. My mind is however wholly undetermined on the subject.

I have not yet received the Lancaster Journal & would thank you to inform Mr. Reynolds of this circumstance.

Your sincere friend

James Buchanan

Hon Walter Franklin

N. B. Be kind enough to present my best respect to Mr. Jenkins, Mr. Rogers, Mr. Slaymaker, & Mr. Reynolds.

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