

H[enry] D[ilworth] Gilpin to MVB, 18 March 1841

Washington

18 March 1841

My dear Sir

I have not executed my promise to write to you earlier because I supposed you would have little leisure amid the busy salutations of your friends in Philadelphia to read my letter and besides we were really so much out of spirits for two or three days that I scarcely felt in a humour to write a word. Your visit had given such real gratification to our little household that it made us feel even more than we otherwise should the breaking up of our happy circle here—and for the first days after your departure we realized ^very keenly^ the change that has come to destroy so many pleasant associations. I have constantly regretted that I did not accompany you to Baltimore. I lost what would have given me much pleasure and gained by staying here what gave me quite the reverse. The dinner on Saturday with the General was such an affair as I never expected to witness—and such a one as I am quite sure was never before seen in that house. There were about forty persons—three more than the table would hold, and they were put at a side table. Before dinner the poor old man was bustling and fidgetting about—running out three or four times into the dining room. The ladies did not appear. Mr. Woodbury, Mr. Paulding, Mr. Calhoun, Col. Johnson & myself were the only democrats. Mr. Adams, Mr. Tyler, the new cabinet, about fifteen opposition Senators (including Rives & Talmadge), old General Van Rensselaer, John C. Clark, Abbot Lawrence, Col. Chambers Col. Todd, Mr. Macalister and some others whom I forget made up the party. The dinner was scarcely over before the old man began with giving toasts and talking incessantly across the table. Mr. Woodbury was the object of some of his jokes, which however being distant I did not hear. You were the subject of a toast—certainly well meant—and of course you were in the company of the ladies, whom in one shape or other he toasted two or three times—making, as he said, the eyes of the Senator from Kentucky sparkle, at the sentiments about the Sen. He let Mr. Paulding and myself escape, except in a repetition of what he told you—that he ^had^ wanted to

compare the two cabinets and see which was the best looking. I suppose he thought it was not fair then to execute his intention as Mr. Forsyth was away. At last the party became quite "social" and when it broke up certainly had none of the gravity of the palace about it. In the drawing room on our return we found Mrs. Rives awaiting us—but none of the ladies of the house. Since then I have not seen him though I am told he is running all round the neighborhood visiting—early in the morning and late in the afternoon— whenever he can get away from office seekers and cabinet councils. The latter are incessant. Martin the porter told Mr. Poinsett that they have them every day and sometimes beginning at 8 o'clock in the morning. It seems to be pretty certain that it has been resolved to give up McLeod and from what I gather Mr. Fox has already gained no small ascendancy with the godlike Daniel. The old General told Mr. Macalister that Lord Palmerston's letter (about McLeod) was a most eloquent production. The friends of Mr. Clay are evidently much out of humour and I think there is every sign of Webster having obtained the ascendant. It is said that Hoffman was put into office by his influence against all that Talmadge could bring and Meredith's appointment in Philadelphia was made directly by him. A fierce contest is raging in regard to the Governor of Iowa which the old General promised to Col. Chambers but which Webster wants to give to a General Wilson from New Hampshire. The General has offered Chambers, the place of Selden, to relinquish the other, but he refuses to do so. Birchard was removed yesterday and Gardiner today; Penrose taking the place of the former and Whittlesey of the latter. The Secretary of the Treasury proposed to Birchard to resign, but he declined. He asked whether there were any grounds for the removal arising out of official incapacity or misconduct; he replied there were not, but they desired to have a political friend in that office.

I gave your memorandum to Major Hobbes who says it will give him the greatest pleasure to attend to it.

I saw Martin today and think him very much better. He says he shall ride out as soon as the weather is warm enough to allow him to do so with safety.

Mrs. Gilpin and Richard both desire me to add their kindest regards.

With great respect

Very truly yours

H.D. Gilpin

Document Information

Date:

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Recipient:

[MVB](#)