

Muscatine Journal
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For the Journal

Washington Correspondence

Washington, Feb. 18, 1854.

When I came out on the street this morning to take a view of Washington, the ground was perfectly white, and it was snowing as though the heavens were to be emptied, and that, too, in as short a time as possible. The snow was falling so thickly that I could scarcely see across the street. I started toward the capitol, but there being no sidewalk, I sank ankle deep in mud and snow at every step. When at last I reached the capitol, I found that Congress did not sit till 11 o'clock; so I thought I would stroll around the city for an hour or two.

The Treasury Building is a pretty edifice, with a long row of columns in front, and stands about a square from the President's house. Passing into the park in front of the White House, I amused myself with a gaze at Clark Mills' great equestrian statue of Jackson. It is a beautiful thing and well worth a long walk on a stormy day to see. The public buildings of Washington are all fine specimens of architecture, and would add greatly to the embellishment of such a city as New York--but here they are sadly out of place; looking like so many palaces in a Hottentot village. The streets, indeed, are fine--wide, straight, and level as a floor. But the buildings, almost invariably, are very poor--two and three story brick houses, and strewed about in clusters; you seldom see a compact square off Pennsylvania Avenue. They look as though they might have been emptied out of a sack by some Brobdignagian gentleman, and when falling, been scattered abroad by the winds. There are scarcely any pavements, and I might almost say no gas, off the thoroughfare, Pennsylvania Avenue. Then, if you should be seized with a desire to go to the Capitol, or somewhere else, you may stand in a puddle of water, with the snow driving in your face for fifteen minutes or more, before an omnibus rolls lazily by; and when one does come, ten-to-one there are nineteen passengers inside and fourteen outside, and while the driver casts on you a look of commiseration, you have the inexpressible satisfaction of knowing that you closely resemble a very moist dishrag (and feel so, too), at the same time that you are unable to discover what benefit you have derived from your fifteen minutes' soaking; and so, driving your fists into the inmost recesses of your breeches pockets, you stride away in despair, with a step and a grimace that would make the fortune of a tragedy actor, while your "onery" appearance is greeted with "screams of laftur" from a pack of vagabond boys over the way. Such is life, and such is Washington!

The Capitol is a very fine building, but it has been so often described, that I will not attempt another portrait. The statuary with which it is adorned is most beautiful; but as I am no connoisseur in such matters, I will let that pass also. The large hall between the two Congressional Chambers is embellished with numerous large paintings, portraying some of the

principal events in American history. One, the "Embarkation of the Pilgrims in the May Flower," struck me as very fine--so fresh and natural. The "Baptism of Pocahontas" is also a noble picture, and worthy the place it occupies.

I passed into the Senate Chamber to see the men who give the people the benefit of their wisdom and learning for a little glory and eight dollars a day. The Senate is now composed of a different material from what it once was. Its glory hath departed. Its halls no longer echo the words of Clay, or Webster, or Calhoun. They have played their parts and retired from the stage; and though they are still occupied by others, the void is felt. The Senators dress very plainly as they should, and all avoid display, and do not speak unless they have something to say--and that cannot be said of the Representatives. Mr. Cass is a fine looking old man; Mr. Douglass, or "Young America," looks like a lawyer's clerk, and Mr. Seward is a slim, dark, bony individual, and looks like a respectable wind would blow him out of the country.

In the House nearly every man seemed to have something weighing on his mind on which the salvation of the Republic depended, and which he appeared very anxious to ease himself of; and so there were generally half a dozen of them on the floor, and "Mr. Chairman! Mr. Chairman!" was echoed from every part of the house. Mr. Benton sits silent and gloomy in the midst of the din, like a lion imprisoned in a cage of monkeys, who, feeling his superiority, disdains to notice their chattering.

February 19.

The Smithsonian Institute is a large, fine building, in the same style of architecture as the Trinity Church of New York. It is composed of the same kind of stone as that edifice, and looks like a half-church and half-castle. It has a fine library, and also an extensive gallery of paintings. Lectures are delivered in it almost every evening. Park Benjamin lectures there this evening.

If there is anything in Washington worth a visit, it is the Museum of the Patent Office. It is free to visitors at all times of the day, and is by far the largest collection of Curiosities in the United States. The first story of this magnificent building is occupied by the models of patents. The second story is occupied by the museum. I spent a very pleasant four hours in this part of the building, looking at the thousands upon thousands of wonders it contains. In one department were several Peruvian mummies of great antiquity. The hair was perfect, and remained plaited just as it was perhaps centuries ago; but the bodies were black, dry, and crisp, and what the appearance of the faces were during life, it was impossible to determine, for nothing remained but a shapeless mass of skin and flesh. The printing press used by Franklin, in London, nearly one hundred and twenty years ago, was an object worthy of notice. The bed is of wood and is not unlike a very shallow box. The platen is only half the size of the bed, thus requiring two pulls of the lever to each full-size sheet. What vast progress has been made in the art of printing! This press is capable of printing about 125 sheets per hour; and after seeing it, I have watched Hoe's great machine throwing off its 20,000 sheets in the same space of time, with an interest I never before felt.

In other cases are to be seen the suits of clothes worn by Washington when he resigned his commission as Cornmander-in-Chief of the American forces; the coat worn by Jackson at the battle of New Orleans; Washington's sword, war-tent, cooking utensils, knives and forks &c., and camp equipage generally; the treaty of the United States with Turkey (a horrible specimen of Oriental chirography); the original Declaration of Independence; autographs of Bonaparte and several kings of Europe; pagan idols; part of the costumes of Atahualpa and Cortes, and thousands of other things of equal interest.

The Washington Monument is as yet but a plain white marble obelisk 150 feet high. It will no doubt be very beautiful when finished. When completed, an iron staircase will run up within 25 feet of the top. It is to be 550 feet high. If Congress would appropriate \$200,000 to the Monument fund, this sum, with the contributions of the people, would build it in four years.

Mr. Forrest played Othello at the National Theatre last night, to a good audience. This is a very large theatre, and the only consequence (sic) in Washington.

W.