

Honorable George P. Marsh (A happy new-year to you all!)

My dear Friend

Hiram Powers

I am afraid you were mistaken in your estimate of Capt. Meigs and that you may judge him better I shall copy below an extract from his letter to a friend of ours in Washington. The occasion of this letter was a conversation with him by that friend, in regard to the appropriation of \$25,000 by Congress, and a remark on her part that Capt. M. would give his views upon it, she wrote out for me, what she understood him to say, but fearing that she might have misstated something, sent him her letter to which he replied as you will see. Mr. Everett, to whom I sent a copy, stated that he had no doubt that I had to contend with the entire influence of Capt. Meigs with the late President - You should know that at the time Capt. M. wrote this letter, he had long since contracted with Mr. Crawford for his statue of "America as Liberty" the same thing, but it does not appear that he said any thing about this to my friend. This contract could not have been made with Mr. Crawford earlier than about 6 months after Congress had as I have always thought, virtually given me that commission, and Capt. M. I know that I expected it - of all this I am quite sure, but I did not know of this contract until long after the occasion of Mr. Crawford's visit here on his last trip home. I had a long talk with him but he said nothing about it although I told him now I had been treated. He offered his services with the President and Capt. Meigs saying that he was going directly to Washington and "if I can do any thing for you I would mind me". The same day he called on my wife where Mr. Henry, and left with him a photograph of his small model of "America" as it is called in his studio at Rome. -

You will perceive that the extract begins with in my "Perhaps \$25,000, may be a very small price for the America." I cannot picture to value it, but I know there is no information in the mouth of the President which would justify him in affixing such a value to it, let Mr. Powers conversed direct with the President, who I am pretty sure has had no letter from him, let him say, I perceive that Congress has voted \$25,000 for a work of art from my hand, I value my America at \$_____ and offer it to the country at that sum - I will send it to Washington, and if upon seeing it, and consulting with those who have knowledge in such matters you think my price reasonable - well -

Then the balance of the appropriation, I offer to execute a statue of - whatever he pleases, of course - if he thinks \$25,000 the proper price of the America he need say nothing of any other work -

The sum is so much greater than the usual price paid for statues, that I think the effect upon our art in this country of paying it will be injurious. Congress will vote large sums to fill the niches of the Capitol if they get the statues at such prices as private persons and other nations may, but if each statue is to cost \$25,000, there will be but about one or two in a generation of 30 years, and there is room for 100 statues.