



**THE WORKS OF
THOMAS
JEFFERSON
VOLUME 12**

The Works of Thomas
Jefferson

Volume 12

THOMAS JEFFERSON

The Works of Thomas Jefferson, Volume 12
Jazzybee Verlag Jürgen Beck
86450 Altenmünster, Loschberg 9
Deutschland

ISBN: 9783849654092

www.jazzybee-verlag.de
admin@jazzybee-verlag.de

CONTENTS:

[ITINERARY AND CHRONOLOGY OF THOMAS JEFFERSON](#)

[CORRESPONDENCE AND OFFICIAL PAPERS](#)

[1816](#)

[1817](#)

[1818](#)

[1819](#)

[1820](#)

[1821](#)

[1822](#)

[1823](#)

[1824](#)

[1825](#)

[1826](#)

[ENDNOTES](#)

ITINERARY AND CHRONOLOGY OF THOMAS JEFFERSON

1816-1826

1816.—July 10.	At Monticello. Writes sketch of Peyton Randolph. Reads proof of Wirt's <i>Life of Patrick Henry</i> .
Sept.	
25.	At Poplar Forest.
Oct. 5.	At Monticello.
16.	Writes inscription for National Capitol.
24-Dec. 5.	At Poplar Forest.
Dec. 11.	At Monticello.
1817.—Apr. 25-6.	At Poplar Forest.
28.	At Monticello.
July 1.	At Poplar Forest.
15.	At Monticello.
Aug. 11- Sept. 18.	At Poplar Forest.
Sept. 21.	At Monticello.
Nov. 22-Dec. 20.	At Poplar Forest.
Dec. 23.	At Monticello.
1818.—Apr. 17-May 3.	At Poplar Forest.
May 6.	At Monticello.

July 3.	At Poplar Forest.	
Aug. 1-4.	At Rockfish Gap.	
7-21.	At Warm Springs.	
Sept. 1.	At Monticello.	
	Writes Anecdotes of	
	Franklin.	
1819.—Apr.	At Poplar Forest.	
22.		
May 1.	At Monticello.	
July 10-Sept.	At Poplar Forest.	
10.		
Sept. 14.	At Monticello.	
Nov.	Draws Plan of	
	circulating medium.	
1820.—Sept.	At Poplar Forest.	
13-21.		
24.	At Monticello.	
Nov. 15.	At Poplar Forest.	
Dec. 19.	At Monticello.	
1821.—Oct.	At Buckspring.	
20.		
27.	At Monticello.	
1822.—May	Writes answer to "A	
	Native of Virginia."	
21-6.	At Poplar Forest.	
30.	At Monticello.	
1823.—May	At Poplar Forest.	
21.		
27.	At Monticello.	
June	At Bedford.	
July	At Monticello.	
1824.—Dec.	Visited by Daniel	

	Webster.		
1825.—Dec.	Drafts Virginia.	Protest	for
1826.—Feb.	Writes Lotteries.	Notes	on
Mar. 16.	Executes Will.		
17.	Adds Codicil to Will.		
June 24.	Declines invitation to join in celebrating July 4th.		
25.	Writes last letter.		
July 4.	Dies.		

CORRESPONDENCE AND OFFICIAL PAPERS

1816

TO SAMUEL KERCHEVAL

j. mss.

Monticello, July 12, 1816 Sir,

—I duly received your favor of June the 13th, with the copy of the letters on the calling a convention, on which you are pleased to ask my opinion. I have not been in the habit of mysterious reserve on any subject, nor of buttoning up my opinions within my own doublet. On the contrary, while in public service especially, I thought the public entitled to frankness, and intimately to know whom they employed. But I am now retired: I resign myself, as a passenger, with confidence to those at present at the helm, and ask but for rest, peace and good will. The question you propose, on equal representation, has become a party one, in which I wish to take no public share. Yet, if it be asked for your own satisfaction only, and not to be quoted before the public, I have no motive to withhold it, and the less from you, as it coincides with your own. At the birth of our republic, I committed that opinion to the world, in the draught of a constitution annexed to the *Notes on Virginia*, in which a provision was inserted for a representation permanently equal. The infancy of the subject at that moment, and our inexperience of self-government, occasioned gross departures in that draught from genuine republican canons. In truth, the abuses of monarchy had so much filled all the space of political contemplation, that we imagined everything republican which was not monarchy. We had not yet penetrated to the

mother principle, that "governments are republican only in proportion as they embody the will of their people, and execute it." Hence, our first constitutions had really no leading principles in them. But experience and reflection have but more and more confirmed me in the particular importance of the equal representation then proposed. On that point, then, I am entirely in sentiment with your letters; and only lament that a copy-right of your pamphlet prevents their appearance in the newspapers, where alone they would be generally read, and produce general effect. The present vacancy too, of other matter, would give them place in every paper, and bring the question home to every man's conscience.

But inequality of representation in both Houses of our legislature, is not the only republican heresy in this first essay of our revolutionary patriots at forming a constitution. For let it be agreed that a government is republican in proportion as every member composing it has his equal voice in the direction of its concerns (not indeed in person, which would be impracticable beyond the limits of a city, or small township, but) by representatives chosen by himself, and responsible to him at short periods, and let us bring to the test of this canon every branch of our constitution.

In the legislature, the House of Representatives is chosen by less than half the people, and not at all in proportion to those who do choose. The Senate are still more disproportionate, and for long terms of irresponsibility. In the Executive, the Governor is entirely independent of the choice of the people, and of their control; his Council equally so, and at best but a fifth wheel to a wagon. In the Judiciary, the judges of the highest courts are dependent on none but themselves. In England, where judges were named and removable at the will of an hereditary executive, from which branch most misrule was feared, and has flowed, it was a great point gained, by fixing them for

life, to make them independent of that executive. But in a government founded on the public will, this principle operates in an opposite direction, and against that will. There, too, they were still removable on a concurrence of the executive and legislative branches. But we have made them independent of the nation itself. They are irremovable, but by their own body, for any depravities of conduct, and even by their own body for the imbecilities of dotage. The justices of the inferior courts are self-chosen, are for life, and perpetuate their own body in succession forever, so that a faction once possessing themselves of the bench of a county, can never be broken up, but hold their county in chains, forever indissoluble. Yet these justices are the real executive as well as judiciary, in all our minor and most ordinary concerns. They tax us at will; fill the office of sheriff, the most important of all the executive officers of the county; name nearly all our military leaders, which leaders, once named, are removable but by themselves. The juries, our judges of all fact, and of law when they choose it, are not selected by the people, nor amenable to them. They are chosen by an officer named by the court and executive. Chosen, did I say? Picked up by the sheriff from the loungings of the court yard, after everything respectable has retired from it. Where then is our republicanism to be found? Not in our constitution certainly, but merely in the spirit of our people. That would oblige even a despot to govern us republicanly. Owing to this spirit, and to nothing in the form of our constitution, all things have gone well. But this fact, so triumphantly misquoted by the enemies of reformation, is not the fruit of our constitution, but has prevailed in spite of it. Our functionaries have done well, because generally honest men. If any were not so, they feared to show it.

But it will be said, it is easier to find faults than to amend them. I do not think their amendment so difficult as is pretended. Only lay down true principles, and adhere to

them inflexibly. Do not be frightened into their surrender by the alarms of the timid, or the croakings of wealth against the ascendancy of the people. If experience be called for, appeal to that of our fifteen or twenty governments for forty years, and show me where the people have done half the mischief in these forty years, that a single despot would have done in a single year; or show half the riots and rebellions, the crimes and the punishments, which have taken place in any single nation, under kingly government, during the same period. The true foundation of republican government is the equal right of every citizen, in his person and property, and in their management. Try by this, as a tally, every provision of our constitution, and see if it hangs directly on the will of the people. Reduce your legislature to a convenient number for full, but orderly discussion. Let every man who fights or pays, exercise his just and equal right in their election. Submit them to approbation or rejection at short intervals. Let the executive be chosen in the same way, and for the same term, by those whose agent he is to be; and leave no screen of a council behind which to skulk from responsibility. It has been thought that the people are not competent electors of judges *learned in the law*. But I do not know that this is true, and, if doubtful, we should follow principle. In this, as in many other elections, they would be guided by reputation, which would not err oftener, perhaps, than the present mode of appointment. In one State of the Union, at least, it has long been tried, and with the most satisfactory success. The judges of Connecticut have been chosen by the people every six months, for nearly two centuries, and I believe there has hardly ever been an instance of change; so powerful is the curb of incessant responsibility. If prejudice, however, derived from a monarchical institution, is still to prevail against the vital elective principle of our own, and if the existing example among ourselves of periodical election of judges by the

people be still mistrusted, let us at least not adopt the evil, and reject the good, of the English precedent; let us retain amovability on the concurrence of the executive and legislative branches, and nomination by the executive alone. Nomination to office is an executive function. To give it to the legislature, as we do, is a violation of the principle of the separation of powers. It swerves the members from correctness, by temptations to intrigue for office themselves, and to a corrupt barter of votes; and destroys responsibility by dividing it among a multitude. By leaving nomination in its proper place, among executive functions, the principle of the distribution of power is preserved, and responsibility weighs with its heaviest force on a single head.

The organization of our county administrations may be thought more difficult. But follow principle, and the knot unties itself. Divide the counties into wards of such size as that every citizen can attend, when called on, and act in person. Ascribe to them the government of their wards in all things relating to themselves exclusively. A justice, chosen by themselves, in each, a constable a military company, a patrol, a school, the care of their own poor, their own portion of the public roads, the choice of one or more jurors to serve in some court, and the delivery, within their own wards, of their own votes for all elective officers of higher sphere, will relieve the county administration of nearly all its business, will have it better done, and by making every citizen an acting member of the government, and in the offices nearest and most interesting to him, will attach him by his strongest feelings to the independence of his country, and its republican constitution. The justices thus chosen by every ward, would constitute the county court, would do its judiciary business, direct roads and bridges, levy county and poor rates, and administer all the matters of common interest to the whole country. These wards, called townships in New England, are the vital

principle of their governments, and have proved themselves the wisest invention ever devised by the wit of man for the perfect exercise of self-government, and for its preservation. We should thus marshal our government into, 1, the general federal republic, for all concerns foreign and federal; 2, that of the State, for what relates to our own citizens exclusively; 3, the county republics, for the duties and concerns of the county; and 4, the ward republics, for the small, and yet numerous and interesting concerns of the neighborhood; and in government, as well as in every other business of life, it is by division and subdivision of duties alone, that all matters, great and small, can be managed to perfection. And the whole is cemented by giving to every citizen, personally, a part in the administration of the public affairs.

The sum of these amendments is, 1. General Suffrage. 2. Equal representation in the legislature. 3. An executive chosen by the people. 4. Judges elective or amovable. 5. Justices, jurors, and sheriffs elective. 6. Ward divisions. And 7. Periodical amendments of the constitution.

I have thrown out these as loose heads of amendment, for consideration and correction; and their object is to secure self-government by the republicanism of our constitution, as well as by the spirit of the people; and to nourish and perpetuate that spirit. I am not among those who fear the people. They, and not the rich, are our dependence for continued freedom. And to preserve their independence, we must not let our rulers load us with perpetual debt. We must make our election between *economy and liberty*, or *profusion and servitude*. If we run into such debts, as that we must be taxed in our meat and in our drink, in our necessities and our comforts, in our labors and our amusements, for our callings and our creeds, as the people of England are, our people, like them, must come to labor sixteen hours in the twenty-four, give the earnings of fifteen of these to the government for their

debts and daily expenses; and the sixteenth being insufficient to afford us bread, we must live, as they now do, on oatmeal and potatoes; have no time to think, no means of calling the mismanagers to account; but be glad to obtain subsistence by hiring ourselves to rivet their chains on the necks of our fellow-sufferers. Our landholders, too, like theirs, retaining indeed the title and stewardship of estates called theirs, but held really in trust for the treasury, must wander, like theirs, in foreign countries, and be contented with penury, obscurity, exile, and the glory of the nation. This example reads to us the salutary lesson, that private fortunes are destroyed by public as well as by private extravagance. And this is the tendency of all human governments. A departure from principle in one instance becomes a precedent for a second; that second for a third; and so on, till the bulk of the society is reduced to be mere automatons of misery, and to have no sensibilities left but for sinning and suffering. Then begins, indeed, the *bellum omnium in omnia*, which some philosophers observing to be so general in this world, have mistaken it for the natural, instead of the abusive state of man. And the fore horse of this frightful team is public debt. Taxation follows that, and in its train wretchedness and oppression.

Some men look at constitutions with sanctimonious reverence, and deem them like the arc of the covenant, too sacred to be touched. They ascribe to the men of the preceding age a wisdom more than human, and suppose what they did to be beyond amendment. I knew that age well; I belonged to it, and labored with it. It deserved well of its country. It was very like the present, but without the experience of the present; and forty years of experience in government is worth a century of book-reading; and this they would say themselves, were they to rise from the dead. I am certainly not an advocate for frequent and untried changes in laws and constitutions. I think moderate

imperfections had better be borne with; because, when once known, we accommodate ourselves to them, and find practical means of correcting their ill effects. But I know also, that laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind. As that becomes more developed, more enlightened, as new discoveries are made, new truths disclosed, and manners and opinions change with the change of circumstances, institutions must advance also, and keep pace with the times. We might as well require a man to wear still the coat which fitted him when a boy, as civilized society to remain ever under the regimen of their barbarous ancestors. It is this preposterous idea which has lately deluged Europe in blood. Their monarchs, instead of wisely yielding to the gradual change of circumstances, of favoring progressive accommodation to progressive improvement, have clung to old abuses, entrenched themselves behind steady habits, and obliged their subjects to seek through blood and violence rash and ruinous innovations, which, had they been referred to the peaceful deliberations and collected wisdom of the nation, would have been put into acceptable and salutary forms. Let us follow no such examples, nor weakly believe that one generation is not as capable as another of taking care of itself, and of ordering its own affairs. Let us, as our sister States have done, avail ourselves of our reason and experience, to correct the crude essays of our first and unexperienced, although wise, virtuous, and well-meaning councils. And lastly, let us provide in our constitution for its revision at stated periods. What these periods should be, nature herself indicates. By the European tables of mortality, of the adults living at any one moment of time, a majority will be dead in about nineteen years. At the end of that period, then, a new majority is come into place; or, in other words, a new generation. Each generation is as independent as the one preceding, as that was of all which had gone before. It has

then, like them, a right to choose for itself the form of government it believes most promotive of its own happiness; consequently, to accommodate to the circumstances in which it finds itself, that received from its predecessors; and it is for the peace and good of mankind that a solemn opportunity of doing this every nineteen or twenty years, should be provided by the constitution; so that it may be handed on, with periodical repairs, from generation to generation, to the end of time, if anything human can so long endure. It is now forty years since the constitution of Virginia was formed. The same tables inform us, that, within that period, two-thirds of the adults then living are now dead. Have then the remaining third, even if they had the wish, the right to hold in obedience to their will, and to laws heretofore made by them, the other two-thirds, who, with themselves, compose the present mass of adults? If they have not, who has? The dead? But the dead have no rights. They are nothing; and nothing cannot own something. Where there is no substance, there can be no accident. This corporeal globe, and everything upon it, belong to its present corporeal inhabitants, during their generation. They alone have a right to direct what is the concern of themselves alone, and to declare the law of that direction; and this declaration can only be made by their majority. That majority, then, has a right to depute representatives to a convention, and to make the constitution what they think will be the best for themselves. But how collect their voice? This is the real difficulty. If invited by private authority, or county or district meetings, these divisions are so large that few will attend; and their voice will be imperfectly, or falsely pronounced. Here, then, would be one of the advantages of the ward divisions I have proposed. The mayor of every ward, on a question like the present, would call his ward together, take the simple yea or nay of its members, convey these to the county court, who would hand on those of all its wards to the proper

general authority; and the voice of the whole people would be thus fairly, fully, and peaceably expressed, discussed, and decided by the common reason of the society. If this avenue be shut to the call of sufferance, it will make itself heard through that of force, and we shall go on, as other nations are doing, in the endless circle of oppression, rebellion, reformation; and oppression, rebellion, reformation, again; and so on forever.

These, Sir, are my opinions of the governments we see among men, and of the principles by which alone we may prevent our own from falling into the same dreadful track. I have given them at greater length than your letter called for. But I cannot say things by halves; and I confide them to your honor, so to use them as to preserve me from the gridiron of the public papers. If you shall approve and enforce them, as you have done that of equal representation, they may do some good. If not, keep them to yourself as the effusions of withered age and useless time. I shall, with not the less truth, assure you of my great respect and consideration. Ref. 002

TO THOMAS APPLETON

j. mss.

Monticello, July 18, 16

Dear Sir,

—Your letter of Mar. 20. & Apr. 15. are both received. The former only a week ago. They brought me the first information of the death of my antient friend Mazzei, which I learn with sincere regret. He had some peculiarities, & who of us has not? But he was of solid worth; honest, able, zealous in sound principles Moral & political, constant in friendship, and punctual in all his undertakings. He was greatly esteemed in this country, and some one has

inserted in our papers an account of his death, with a handsome and just eulogy of him, and a proposition to publish his life in one 8-vo. volume. I have no doubt but that what he has written of himself during the portion of the revolutionary period he passed with us, would furnish some good material for our history of which there is already a wonderful scarcity. But where this undertaker of his history is to get his materials, I know not, nor who he is.

I have received Mr. Carmigniani's letter requesting the remittance of his money in my hands. How and when this can be done I have written him in the inclosed letter, which I leave open for your perusal; after which be so good as to stick a wafer in it, & have it delivered. I had just begun a letter to Mazzei, excusing to him the non-remittance the present year, as requested thro' you by his family. And I should have stated to him with good faith, that the war-taxes of the last year, almost equal to the amount of our whole income, and a season among the most unfavorable to agriculture ever known made it a year of war as to it's pressure, & obliged me to postpone the commencement of the annual remittances until the ensuing spring. The receipt of your letter, and of Mr. Carmigniani's only rendered it necessary to change the address of mine. The sale was made during the war, when the remittance of the price was impossible: nor was there here any depot for it at that time which would have been safe, profitable, and ready to repay the principal on demand. I retained it therefore myself to avoid the risk of the banks, to yield the profit the treasury could have given, and to admit a command of the principal at a shorter term. It was of course, therefore that I must invest it in some way to countervail the interest, and being but a farmer receiving rents and profits but once a year, it will take time to restore it to the form of money again, which I explained to Mr. Mazzei in the letter I wrote to him at the time. Exchange is much against us at present, owing to the immense importations made immediately after

peace, and to the redundancy of our paper medium. The legislatures have generally required the banks to call in this redundancy. They are accordingly curtailing discounts, & collecting their debts, so that by the spring, when the first remittance will be made, our medium will be greatly reduced, and it's value increased proportionably. The crop of this year too, when exported will so far lessen the foreign debt & the demand for bills of exchange. These circumstances taken together promise a good reduction in the rate of exchange, which you can more fully explain in conversation to Mr. Carmigniani.

I am happy to inform you that the administrator of Mr. Bellini has at length settled his account, and deposited the balance 635. Dollars 48 cents in the bank of Virginia, at Richmond. I think it the safest bank in the U. S. and it has been for some time so prudently preparing itself for cash payments, as to inspire a good degree of confidence, & moreover I shall keep my eye on it, but the money while there bears no interest; and I did not chuse to take it myself on interest reimbursable *on demand*. It would be well then that Mr. Fancelli should withdraw it as soon as he can; his draught on me shall be answered at sight to the holder, by one on the bank. In the present state of our exchange, & the really critical standing of our merchants at this time, I have been afraid to undertake it's remittance, because it could only be done by a bill of some merchant here on his correspondent in England, and both places are at this time a little suspicious. I know nothing so deplorable as the present condition of the inhabitants of Europe and do not wonder therefore at their desire to come to this country. Laborers in any of the arts would find abundant employ in this state at 100. D. a year & their board and lodging. And indeed if a sober good humored man understanding the vineyard & kitchen garden would come to me on those terms, bound to serve 4. years, I would advance his passage on his arrival, setting it off against his

subsequent wages. But he must come to the port of Norfolk or Richmond, & no where else. If such a one should occur to you, you would oblige me by sending him. I remark the temporary difficulty you mention of obtaining good Montepulciano, and prefer waiting for that, when to be had, to a quicker supply of any other kind which might not so certainly suit our taste. It might not be amiss perhaps to substitute a bottle or two as samples of any other wines which would bear the voyage, and be of a quality and price to recommend them. You know we like dry wines, or at any rate not more than sillery. I salute you with constant friendship and respect. ^{Ref. 003}

TO JOHN TAYLOR

j. mss.

Monticello, July 21. 16

Dear Sir,

—Yours of the 10th is received, and I have to acknowledge a copious supply of the turnip seed requested. Besides taking care myself, I shall endeavour again to commit it to the depository of the neighborhood, generally found to be the best precaution against losing a good thing. I will add a word on the political part of our letters. I believe we do not differ on either of the points you suppose: on education certainly not: of which the proofs are my bill “for the diffusion of knolege,” prepared near 40. years ago; and my uniform endeavour to this day to get our counties divided into wards, one of the principal objects of which is the establishment of a primary school in each. But education not being a branch of municipal government, but, like the other arts and sciences, an accident only, I did not place it with election, as a fundamental member in the structure of government. Nor, I believe, do we differ as to the county

courts. I acknowledge the value of this institution, that it is in truth our principal Executive & Judiciary, and that it does much for little *pecuniary* reward. It is their self-appointment I wish to correct, to find some means of breaking up a Cabal, when such a one gets possession of the bench. When this takes place, it becomes the most afflicting of tyrannies, because it's powers are so various, and exercised on every thing most immediately around us. And how many instances have you and I known of these monopolies of county administration! I know a county in which a particular family (a numerous one) got possession of the bench, and for a whole generation, never admitted a man on it who was not of it's clan or connection. I know a county now of 1500. militia, of which 60. are federalists. It's court is of 30. members of whom 20. are federalists (every third man of the sect) wherein there are large and populous districts, without a justice, because without a federalist for appointment, and the militia as disproportionably under federal officers; and there is no authority on earth which can break up this junto short of a general convention. The remaining 1440 free, fighting, & paying citizens are governed by men neither of their choice nor confidence & without a hope of relief. They are certainly excluded from the blessings of a free government for life, & indefinitely for ought the constitution has provided. This solecism may be called anything but republican, and ought undoubtedly to be corrected. I salute you with constant friendship and respect.

TO JOSEPH DELAPLAINE

j. mss.

Monticello, July 26, 1816

Dear Sir,

—In compliance with the request of your letter of the 6th inst., with respect to Peyton Randolph, I have to observe that the difference of age between him and myself admitted my knowing little of his early life, except what I accidentally caught from occasional conversations. I was a student at college when he was already Attorney General at the bar, and a man of established years; and I had no intimacy with him until I went to the bar myself, when, I suppose, he must have been upwards of forty; from that time, and especially after I became a member of the legislature, until his death, our intimacy was cordial, and I was with him when he died. Under these circumstances, I have committed to writing as many incidents of his life as memory enabled me to do, and to give faith to the many and excellent qualities he possessed, I have mentioned those minor ones which he did not possess; considering true history, in which all will be believed, as preferable to unqualified panegyric, in which nothing is believed. I avoided, too, the mention of trivial incidents, which, by not distinguishing, disparage a character; but I have not been able to state early dates. Before forwarding this paper to you, I received a letter from Peyton Randolph, his great nephew, repeating the request you had made. I therefore put the paper under a blank cover, addressed to you, unsealed, and sent it to Peyton Randolph, that he might see what dates as well as what incidents might be collected, supplementary to mine, and correct any which I had inexactly stated; circumstances may have been misremembered, but nothing, I think, of substance. This account of Peyton Randolph, therefore, you may expect to be forwarded by his nephew.

You requested me when here, to communicate to you the particulars of two transactions in which I was myself an agent, to wit: the *coup de main* of Arnold on Richmond, and Tarleton's on Charlottesville. I now enclose them, detailed with an exactness on which you may rely with an entire

confidence. But, having an insuperable aversion to be drawn into controversy in the public papers, I must request not to be quoted either as to these or the account of Peyton Randolph. Accept the assurances of my esteem and respect. Ref. 004

TO JAMES MADISON Ref. 005

Monticello Aug. 2. 16

Dear Sir,

—Mrs. Randolph, Ellen & myself intended before this to have had the pleasure of seeing Mrs Madison and yourself at Montpelier as we mentioned to Mr Coles; but three days ago Mrs Randolph was taken with a fever, which has confined her to her bed ever since. It is so moderate that we are in the hourly hope of its leaving her and, after a little time to recruit her strength, of carrying her purpose into execution, which we shall lose no time in doing. In the meantime I salute Mrs Madison & yourself with unceasing affection & respect.

TO WILLIAM WIRT Ref. 006

j. mss.

Monticello, September 4, 1816

Dear Sir,

—I have read, with great delight, the portion of the history of Mr. Henry which you have been so kind as to favour me with, and which is now returned. And I can say, from my own knowledge of the contemporary characters introduced into the canvas, that you have given them quite as much lustre as themselves would have asked. The exactness, too, of your details has, in several instances,

corrected their errors in my own recollections, where they had begun to falter.

In result, I scarcely find anything needing revisal; yet, to show you that I have scrupulously sought occasions of animadversion, I will particularize the following passages, which I noted as I read them.

Page 11: I think this passage had better be moderated. That Mr. Henry read Livy through once a year is a known impossibility with those who knew him. He may have read him once, and some general history of Greece; but certainly not twice. A first reading of a book he could accomplish sometimes and on some subjects, but never a second. He knew well the geography of his own country, but certainly never made any other a study. So, as to our ancient charters; he had probably read those in Stith's history; but no man ever more undervalued chartered titles than himself. He drew all natural rights from a purer source—the feelings of his own breast.

He never, in conversation or debate, mentioned a hero, a worthy, or a fact in Greek or Roman history, but so vaguely and loosely as to leave room to back out, if he found he had blundered.

The study and learning ascribed to him, in this passage, would be inconsistent with the excellent and just picture given of his indolence through the rest of the work.

Page 33, line 4: Inquire further into the fact alleged that Henry was counsel for Littlepage. I am much persuaded he was counsel for Dandridge. There was great personal antipathy between him and Littlepage, and the closest intimacy with Dandridge, who was his near neighbor, in whose house he was at home as one of the family, who was his earliest and greatest admirer and patron, and whose daughter became, afterwards, his second wife.

It was in his house that, during a course of Christmas festivities, I first became acquainted with Mr. Henry. This, it is true, is but presumptive evidence, and may be

overruled by direct proof. But I am confident he could never have undertaken any case against Dandridge; considering the union of their bosoms, it would have been a great crime. ^{Ref. 007}

TO ALBERT GALLATIN

j. mss.

Monticello, September 8, 1816

Dear Sir,

—The jealousy of the European governments rendering it unsafe to pass letters through their postoffices, I am obliged to borrow the protection of your cover to procure a safe passage for the enclosed letter to Madame de Staël, and to ask the favor of you to have it delivered at the hotel of M. de Lessert without passing through the post-office.

In your answer of June 7 to mine of May 18, you mentioned that you did not understand to what proceeding of Congress I alluded as likely to produce a removal of most of the members, and that by a spontaneous movement of the people, unsuggested by the newspapers, which had been silent on it. I alluded to the law giving themselves 1500 D. a year. There has never been an instant before of so unanimous an opinion of the people, and that through every State in the Union. A very few members of the first order of merit in the House will be re-elected, Clay, of Kentucky, by a small majority, and a few others. But the almost entire mass will go out, not only those who supported the law or voted for it, or skulked from the vote, but those who voted against it or opposed it actively, if they took the money; and the examples of refusals to take it were very few. The next Congress, then, Federal as well as Republican, will be almost wholly of new members.

We have had the most extraordinary year of drought and cold ever known in the history of America. In June, instead of $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches, our average of rain for that month, we only had $\frac{1}{3}$ of an inch; in August, instead of $9\frac{1}{6}$ inches our average, we had only $\frac{8}{10}$ of an inch; and still it continues. The summer, too, has been as cold as a moderate winter. In every State north of this there has been frost in every month of the year; in this State we had none in June and July, but those of August killed much corn over the mountains. The crop of corn through the Atlantic States will probably be less than one-third of an ordinary one, that of tobacco still less, and of mean quality. The crop of wheat was middling in quantity, but excellent in quality. But every species of bread grain taken together will not be sufficient for the subsistence of the inhabitants, and the exportation of flour, already begun by the indebted and the improvident, to whatsoever degree it may be carried, will be exactly so much taken from the mouths of our own citizens. My anxieties on this subject are the greater, because I remember the deaths which the drought of 1755 in Virginia produced from the want of food.

There are not to be the smallest opposition to the election of Monroe and Tompkins, the Republicans being undivided and the Federalists desperate. The Hartford Convention and peace of Ghent have nearly annihilated them.

Our State is becoming clamorous for a convention and amendment for their constitution, and I believe will obtain it. It was the first constitution formed in the United States, and of course the most imperfect. The other States improved in theirs in proportion as new precedents were added, and most of them have since amended. We have entered on a liberal plan of internal improvements, and the universal approbation of it will encourage and insure its prosecution. I recollect nothing else domestic worth noting to you, and therefore place here my respectful and affectionate salutations.

TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE (JAMES MONROE.)

j. mss.

Monticello, October 16, 1816

Dear Sir,

—If it be proposed to place an inscription on the capitol, the lapidary style requires that essential facts only should be stated, and these with a brevity admitting no superfluous word. The essential facts in the two inscriptions proposed are these:

**FOUNDED 1791.—BURNT BY A BRITISH ARMY
1814.—RESTORED BY CONGRESS 1817.**

The reasons for this brevity are that the letters must be of extraordinary magnitude to be read from below; that little space is allowed them, being usually put into a pediment or in a frieze, or on a small tablet on the wall; and in our case, a third reason may be added, that no passion can be imputed to this inscription, every word being justifiable from the most classical examples.

But a question of more importance is whether there should be one at all? The barbarism of the conflagration will immortalize that of the nation. It will place them forever in degraded comparison with the execrated Bonaparte, who, in possession of almost every capitol in Europe, injured no one. Of this, history will take care, which all will read, while our inscription will be seen by few. Great Britain, in her pride and ascendancy, has certainly hated and despised us beyond every earthly object. Her hatred may remain, but the hour of her contempt is passed and is succeeded by dread; not at present, but a distant and deep one. It is the greater as she feels herself plunged into an abyss of ruin from which no

human means point out an issue. We also have more reason to hate her than any nation on earth. But she is not now an object for hatred. She is falling from her transcendent sphere, which all men ought to have wished, but not that she should lose all place among nations. It is for the interest of all that she should be maintained, *nearly* on a par with other members of the republic of nations. Her power, absorbed into that of any other, would be an object of dread to all, and to us more than all, because we are accessible to her alone and through her alone. The armies of Bonaparte with the fleets of Britain, would change the aspect of our destinies. Under these prospects should we perpetuate hatred against her? Should we not, on the contrary, begin to open ourselves to other and more rational dispositions? It is not improbable that the circumstances of the war and her own circumstances may have brought her wise men to begin to view us with other and even with kindred eyes. Should not our wise men, then, lifted above the passions of the ordinary citizen, begin to contemplate what *will be* the interests of our country on so important a change among the elements which influence it? I think it would be better to give her time to show her present temper, and to prepare the minds of our citizens for a corresponding change of disposition, by acts of comity towards England rather than by commemoration of hatred. These views might be greatly extended. Perhaps, however, they are premature, and that I may see the ruin of England nearer than it really is. This will be matter of consideration with those to whose councils we have committed ourselves, and whose wisdom, I am sure, will conclude on what is best. Perhaps they may let it go off on the single and short consideration that the thing can do no good, and may do harm. Ever and affectionately yours.

TO MATHEW CAREY

Poplar Forest near Lynchburg, Nov. 11, 16

Dear Sir,

—I received here (where I pass a good deal of my time) your favor of Oct. 22. covering a Prospectus of a new edition of your *Olive branch*. I subscribe to it with pleasure, because I believe it has done and will do much good, in holding up the mirror to both parties, and exhibiting to both their political errors. That I have had my share of them, I am not vain enough to doubt, and some indeed I have recognized. There is one however which I do not, altho' charged to my account, in your book, and as that is the subject of this letter, & I have my pen in my hand, I will say a very few words on it. It is my rejection of a British treaty without laying it before the Senate. It has never, I believe, been denied that the President may reject a treaty after it's ratification has been advised by the Senate, then certainly he may before that advice: and if he has made up his mind to reject it, it is more respectful to the Senate to do it without, than against their advice. It must not be said that their advice may cast new light on it. Their advice is a bald resolution of yea or nay, without assigning a single reason or motive.

You ask if I mean to publish anything on the subject of a letter of mine to my friend Charles Thompson? Certainly not. I write nothing for publication, and last of all things should it be on the subject of religion. On the dogmas of religion as distinguished from moral principles, all mankind, from the beginning of the world to this day, have been quarrelling, fighting, burning and torturing one another, for abstractions unintelligible to themselves and to all others, and absolutely beyond the comprehension of the human mind. Were I to enter on that arena, I should only add an unit to the number of Bedlamites. Accept the assurance of my great esteem and respect.

TO GEORGE LOGAN

j. mss.

Poplar Forest near Lynchburg, Nov. 12, 16

Dear Sir,

—I received your favor of Oct. 16, at this place, where I pass much of my time, very distant from Monticello. I am quite astonished at the idea which seems to have got abroad; that I propose publishing something on the subject of religion, and this is said to have arisen from a letter of mine to my friend Charles Thompson, in which certainly there is no trace of such an idea. When we see religion split into so many thousand of sects, and I may say Christianity itself divided into it's thousands also, who are disputing, anathematizing and where the laws permit burning and torturing one another for abstractions which no one of them understand, and which are indeed beyond the comprehension of the human mind, into which of the chambers of this Bedlam would a [*torn*] man wish to thrust himself. The sum of all religion as expressed by it's best preacher, "fear god and love thy neighbor" contains no mystery, needs no explanation. But this wont do. It gives no scope to make dupes; priests could not live by it. Your idea of the moral obligations of governments are perfectly correct. The man who is dishonest as a statesman would be a dishonest man in any station. It is strangely absurd to suppose that a million of human beings collected together are not under the same moral laws which bind each of them separately. It is a great consolation to me that our government, as it cherishes most it's duties to its own citizens, so is it the most exact in it's moral conduct towards other nations. I do not believe that in the four administrations which have taken place, there has been a single instance of departure from good faith towards other nations. We may sometimes have mistaken our rights, or made an erroneous estimate of the actions of others, but no