

N^o. 11.

Lett. to be left

~~No. 32.~~Montpellier Nov^r 1826

Dear friend

I received some days ago your letter of Aug. 28. If I did not invite an earlier one by my example, it was because I often heard of you, and was unwilling to add ~~the weight~~ of a feather to the oppressive weight of correspondence which I well know to be your unavoidable lot. You will never doubt that your happiness is very dear to me; and I feel the sentiment growing stronger as the loss of others dear to us both, shortens the list to which we belong. That which we have lately sustained at Monticello is irreparable, but was attended with every circumstance that could soothe us under it. I wish I was not obliged to add "with one afflicting exception". His family, so long in the lap of all the best enjoyments of life, is threatened with the contrast of pinching poverty. The expences of his numerous household, his extensive hospitalities, and a series of short crops and low markets, to which are to be added old debts contracted in public service abroad, and new ones for which private friendship had made him responsible; all these causes together, had produced a situation of which he seems not to have been fully aware, till it was brought home to his reflections by the calls of creditors (themselves pressed by the difficulties ^{of the times,} and by the impossibility of satisfying them without a complete sacrifice of his property; perhaps not even by that, at such a crisis. In this posture of things, he acquiesced in an appeal to the Legislature for the privilege of a Lottery. This was granted, and arrangements made which promised relief, with a residuary competence for his beloved daughter and her children. The general sensation produced by the resort to a lottery, and by the occasion for it, unfortunately led some of his most enthusiastic admirers, to check the progress of the measure by attempting to substitute patriotic subscriptions, which they were so sanguine as to rely on, till the sad event on the 1st of July, benumbed, as it ought not to have done, the generous

experiment, with a like effect, which ought still less to have happened, on the lottery itself. And it is now found that the subscriptions do not exceed ten or twelve thousand dollars, and the tickets, but a very ⁱⁿ⁻considerable number: whilst the debts are not much short of one hundred thousand dollars, an amount which a forced sale, under existing circumstances, of the whole estate [negroes included] would not perhaps reach. Faint hopes exist that renewed efforts may yet effectuate such a sale of tickets as may save something for the family; and fainter ones that the Legislature of the State may interpose a saving hand. God grant it: But ^{we} are all aware of the difficulties to be encountered there. I well know, my dear Sir, the pain which this melancholy picture will give you, by what I feel at the necessity of presenting it. I have duly adverted to the generous hint as to the E. Florida location. But for any immediate purpose, it is in any form whatever, a resource perfectly dormant, and must continue so too long for the purpose in question. Your allusion to it is, nevertheless, a proof of the goodness which dwells in your heart; and whenever known will be so regarded. - The urgency of particular demands has induced the Executor Thomas Jefferson Randolph who is the depositee of the manuscripts, to undertake an immediate publication of a memoir, partly biographical, partly political and miscellaneous, left in the hand writing of his grandfather, the proceeds of which he hopes will be ^{of} critical use; and if prompt & extensive opportunities be given for subscriptions, there may be no disappointment. The work will recommend ^{not only} itself by personal details interwoven into it, but by Debates in Congress on the question of independence, and other very important subjects co-eval with its Declaration, as the Debates were taken down & preserved by the illustrious member. The memoir will contain also very interesting views of the Origin of the French Revolution, and its progress & phenomena during his diplomatic residence at Paris, with reflections on its tendencies & consequences.

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A trial will probably be made to secure the copy right of the publication, both in England & in France. In the latter case, your friendly counsel will of course be resorted to, and I mention ^{it} that you may in the mean time be turning the subject in your thoughts. The manuscripts of which the Memoir makes a part, are great in extent, and doubtless rich in matter; and discreet extracts may perhaps prove a further pecuniary resource, from time to time, but how soon, and in what degree, I have not the means of judging. Mrs. Randolph with her two youngest children left Montpelier some days ago on her way to pass the winter with Mrs. Coolidge. Such a change of scene had become essential to her health as well as to her feelings. She has made up her mind for the worst results; a merit which quickens the sympathy otherwise so intense. She was accompanied by her son Thos. J. Randolph who will endeavor to make arrangements with the Northern printers for the volume to be published. It will be an Octavo of about three hundred pages.

Your sketch of European prospects is valuable for its facts, and especially for its authenticity. The contents of the foreign Gazettes find their way to us thro' our own; but do not convey every thing as ours do to you. You will have seen the mortifying scenes produced in Congress by the Panama Mission. The fever of party spirit was an endemic which drew into it every ill humour, till the whole body was infected. The malady however was far less malignant out of doors than within; and I hope our S. American friends will make allowances, till a development of the real feelings here shall be seen. The Congress at Panama, after a partial execution of its business, has adjourned to Mexico. One of our Envoys Mr. Anderson died on his way there, and Mr. Sargent the other is still here. Who is to be his associate in the place of Mr. A. is not known; nor is it known when he or they are to set out. Bolivar appears to have ^{given} a Constitution to the new State in Peru, of a countenance not altogether belonging to the American ^{family}; I have not yet seen its details. Whether it shows him an apostate, or the people there, in his view, too benighted as yet, for self-government may possibly

possibly be a question. — Another mortifying topic is the Greek equipment at New York. It appears the ample fund for two frigates at an early day, has procured but ^{one} which has but recently sailed. The indignation of the public is highly excited; and a regular investigation of the lamentable abuse, is going on. In the mean time Greece is bleeding in consequence of it, as is every heart that sympathizes with her noble cause. You will see by our Gazette, also that the community is drawn into a premature ferment by the partisans of the Presidential Candidates, the actual incumbent, and General Jackson in whose favor, all the opponents of the other are at present centering their efforts. The race, according to appearances, is likely to be a close one. But there is time enough for the political vicissitudes, which often occur.

You possess, notwithstanding your distance, better information concerning Miss Wright and her experiment, than we do here. We learn only that she has chosen for it a remote spot in the western part of Tennessee, and has commenced her enterprise; but with what prospects, we know not. I wrote her without delay according to my purpose intended to you, a letter of some length in answer to one from her. Mr. Madison wrote at the same time. I hope these letters, mine at least, reached her; not because it contained any thing of much importance, but because it was dictated by the respect we feel for her fine genius and her exalted benevolence. Her plan contemplated a provision for the expatriation of her Eliza, but without specifying it; from which I infer the difficulty felt in devising a satisfactory one. Could this part of the plan be ensured, the other essential part, would come about of itself. Manumissions, now, more than keep pace with the outlets provided, and the increase of them is checked only by their remaining in the country. This obstacle removed and all others would yield to the emancipating disposition. To say nothing of partial modes, what would be more simple, with the requisite grant of power to Congress, than to purchase all female infants at their birth, leaving them in the service of the holder to a reasonable age, on condition of their receiving an elementary education. The annual number of female ^{births} may be stated at twenty thousand; and the cost at less than one hundred dollars, at the most: a sum which would not be felt by the Nation; and ^{be} even within the compass of State resources. But no such effort

effort would be listened to, whilst the impression remains, and it seems to be indelible, that the two races cannot co-exist, both being free & equal. The great sine qua non therefore is some external asylum for the coloured race. In the mean time the taunts to which the misfortune exposes us in Europe are the more to be deplored, as they impair the influence of our political example; tho' they come with an ill grace, from the quarter most lavish of them; the quarter which obtruded the evil, and which has but lately become a penitent under ~~circumstances~~ suspicious appearances.

I enclose a copy of the "Report" you ask for. I should have sent you one long ago, but a copy was not to be had. It has just been republished, with some documents annexed, relating to the same subject; and I lost no time in procuring you one. As I have been charged with inconsistency in not putting a veto on the last act of Congress establishing a Bank, a power to do which was denied in the Report, a word of explanation may not be improper. My construction of the Constitution on this point is not changed. But I regarded the reiterated sanctions given to the power by the exercise of it, thro' a long period of time, in every variety of form, and in some form or other, under every administration preceding mine, with the general concurrence of the State authorities, and acquiescence of the people at large, and without a glimpse of change in the public opinion, but evidently with a growing confirmation of it; all this I regarded as a construction put on the Constitution by the Nation, which having made it had the supreme right to declare its meaning; and regarding moreover, the establishment of a Bank under the existing circumstances as the only expedient for substituting a sound currency for ~~in~~ place of the vitiated one working so much.

much mischief. I did not feel myself, as a public man, at liberty, to sacrifice all these public considerations to my private opinion.

Will you accept another Document on another subject, which happens to have been just reprinted at the instance, it seems of a Grandson of George Mason, who sent me the copy, with the request of information as to the origin and occasion of the paper. I repeat the explanation given to him. The Anglican Hierarchy, existing in Virginia prior to the Revolution was abolished by an early act of the Independent Legislature. In the year 1785 a Bill was introduced under the auspices of Mr Henry, imposing a general tax for the support of "Teachers of the Christian Religion." It made a progress threatening a majority of votes in its favor. As an expedient to defeat it, we proposed that it should be postponed to another Session, and printed in the mean time for public consideration. Such an appeal, in a case so important and so unforeseen, could not be resisted. With a view to arouse the people, it was thought proper, that a Memorial should be drawn up, the task being assigned to me, to be printed & circulated through the State for a general signature. The experiment succeeded. The Memorial was so extensively signed by the various Religious sects, including a considerable portion of the Old Hierarchy, that the projected innovation was crushed; and under the influence of the popular sentiment, then called forth, the well known Bill prepared by Mr Jefferson for "Establishing Religious freedom", passed into a law, as it now stands, in our Code of Statutes.

Return the respects & good wishes of us all to your amiable family circle, and be assured that my heart is as it always has been devoted to your happiness. Mr Madison has the same feelings. My mother now touching her 96th year received your kind remembrance with much sensibility. She forgets many things she says, but shall never forget General Lafayette the great & good friend of her Country.

As ever Adieu with unchanging affection

James Madison

As Mr. Levasseur will be authorized before this reaches you, to receive our congratulations on the event of his trip to Germany, present them to him in the terms best suited to the happy occasion.