

**James Madison to Marie Joseph Paul Yves Roch  
Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette, February 20,  
1828. Transcription: The Writings of James Madison,  
ed. Gaillard Hunt. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons,  
1900-1910.**

**TO MARQUIS DE LA FAYETTE. MAD. MSS.**

Montpr., Feby 20, 1828

My dear friend, Your favor of Ocr. 27 has been some time on hand, tho' it met with delays, after it got into port. My health in which you take so kind an interest was as reported interrupted by a severe, tho' short attack, but is now very good. I hope yours is so without having suffered any interruption.

I wish I could give you fuller & better accounts of the Monticello affairs. Neither Virginia, nor any other State has added to the provision made for Mrs. Randolph by S. Carolina & Louisiana; and the Lottery, owing to several causes, has entirely failed. The property sold, consisting of *all* the Items except the lands & a few pictures & other ornaments, was fortunate in the prices obtained. I know not the exact amount. But a balance of debt remains, which I fear, in the sunken value and present unsalableness of landed property, will require for its discharge a more successful use of the manuscripts proper for the Press, than is likely to be soon effected. A prospectus has been lately published by Mr. Jefferson Randolph, extending to 3 or 4 80 vols., and considerable progress is made, I understand, in selecting (a very delicate task) and transcribing (a tedious one) the materials for the Edition. In this country also, subscriptions in the extent hoped for,

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will require time, and arrangements are yet to be made for cotemporary publications in England & France, in both of which they are as they ought to be contemplated. I have apprized Mr. Randolph of your friendly dispositions with respect to a French Edition &c, for which he is very thankful, and means to profit by. From this view of the matter, we can only flatter ourselves that the result, will be earlier, than the promise, and prove adequate to the occasion. If the difficulties in the way of the enlarged plan of publication can be overcome, and the work have a sale corresponding with its intrinsic merits, it cannot fail to be very productive. A memoir making a part of it will be particularly attractive in France, portraying as it does the Revolutionary scenes, whilst Mr. Jefferson was in Paris. Is there not some danger that a censorship, may shut the press against such a publication? I fear the translator will be obliged to skip over parts at least, and those perhaps among the most interesting.

Mrs. M. has just recd. a letter from Mrs. Randolph, in which she

manifests a fixed purpose of returning to Virginia, in the month of May. Her health has been essentially improved since she left it.

I was aware, when I saw the printed letter of Mr. Jefferson in which he animadverted on licentious printers, that if seen in Europe, it would receive the misconstruction, or rather perversion to which you allude. Certain it is that no man more than Mr. Jefferson, regarded the freedom of the press, as an essential safeguard to free Govt., to which no man could be more devoted than he was, and that he never could therefore have expressed a syllable or entertained a thought unfriendly to it.

I have not supposed it worth while to notice at so late a day the misprint in the "Enquirer" to which you refer, because I take for granted that a correct expression of what you said on the 4th of July, will be preserved in depositories more likely to be resorted to than a Newspaper.

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We learn with much gratification that the Greeks are rescued from the actual atrocities suffered, & the horrible doom threatened from the successes of their savage Enemy. The disposition to be made of them by the mediating Powers is a problem full of anxiety. We hope for the best, after their escape from the worst. We are particularly gratified also by the turn given to the elections in France, so little expected at the date of your letter, and which must give some scope for your patriotic exertions. If the event does not mean all that we wish it to do, it marks a progress of the public sentiment in a good direction. Your speech on the tomb of Manuel is well calculated to nourish & stimulate it.

I well knew the painful feelings with which you would observe the extravagances produced by the Presidential contest. They have found their way into the discussions of Congress & the State Legislatures, and have assumed forms that cannot be too much deplored. It happens too unfortunately, that the questions of Tariff & of Roads & Canals, which divide the public, on the grounds both of the Constn. & of justice, come on at the same time, are blended with & greatly increase the flame kindled by the Electioneering zeal. In Georgia fuel was derived from a further source, a discontent at the tardy removal of the Indians from lands within her State limits. Resolutions of both Georgia & S. Carolina have been passed & published which abroad may be regarded as striking at the Union itself, but they are ebullitions of the moment, and so regarded here. I am sorry that Virginia has caught too much of the prevailing fever. I think that with her at least its symptoms are abating.

Your answer to Mr. Clay was included in the voluminous testimony published by him, in repelling charges made agst. him. Your recollections could not fail to be of avail to him, and were so happily stated as to give umbrage to no party.

In the zeal of party, a large & highly respectable meeting at Richmond, in recommending Presidential Electors, were led by a misjudging policy to put on their ticket the names of Mr. Monroe & myself, not only without our sanction, but on sufficient presumptions that they would be withdrawn. In my answer to that effect, I have ventured to throw in

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a dehortation from the violent manner in which the contest is carried on. How it may be relished by the parties I know not.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Madison's declination was addressed to Francis Brooke and printed in the Richmond Enquirer March 4:

Montpellier, Feby 22, 1828.

Dear Sir, The mail of last evening brought me your circular communication, by which I am informed of my being nominated by the Convention at Richmond on the 8th of Jany. one of the Electors recommended for the next appointment of Chief Magistrate of the U. States.

Whilst I express the great respect I feel to be due to my fellow Citizens composing that assembly, I must request that another name be substituted for mine on their Electoral ticket.

After a continuance in Public Life, with a very brief interval, through a period of more than forty years, and at the age then attained, I considered myself as violating no duty, in allotting for what of life might remain, a retirement from scenes of political agitation & excitement. Adhering to this view of my situation, I have forborne during the existing contest, as I had done during the preceding, to participate in any measures of a party character; and the restraint imposed on myself, is necessarily strengthened by an admonishing sense of increasing years. Nor, with these considerations could I fail to combine, a recollection of the Public relations in which I had stood to the distinguished Individuals now dividing the favour of their country, and the proofs given to both, of the high estimation in which they were held by me.

In offering this explanation, I hope I may be pardoned for not suppressing a wish, which must be deeply & extensively felt, that the discussions incident to the depending contest, may be conducted in a spirit and manner, neither unfavorable to a dispassionate result,

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nor unworthy of the great & advancing cause of Representative Government.— *Mad. MSS.*

You sympathize too much with a Country that continues its affection for you, without abatement, not to be anxious to know the probable result, as well as the present state of the ardent Contest. I can only say that the Party for Genl. Jackson are quite confident, and that for Mr. Adams, apparently with but faint hopes. Whether any change, for which there is time, will take place in the prospect, cannot be foreseen. A good deal will depend on the vote of N. York, and I see by the Newspapers that the sudden death of Mr. Clinton is producing in both parties rival appeals thro' obituary Eulogies, to the portion of the people particularly attached to him.

Miss F. Wright has just returned in good health, via N. Orleans, to her Establishment in Tennessee,

and has announced a change in the plan of it, probably not unknown to you. With her rare talents & still rarer disinterestedness she has I fear created insuperable obstacles to the good fruits of which they might be productive by her disregard or rather defiance of the most established opinion & vivid feelings. Besides her views of amalgamating the white & black population so universally obnoxious, she gives an éclât to her notions on the subject of Religion & of marriage, the effect of which your knowledge of this Country can readily estimate. Her sister in her absence had exchanged her celibacy for the state of wedlock, with what companion I am not informed, nor whether with the new or old ideas of the conjugal knot.

Our University is doing, tho' not as well as we cd. wish, as well as could be reasonably expected. An early laxity of discipline, had occasioned irregularities in the habits of the students which were rendering the Institution unpopular. To this evil an effectual remedy has been applied. The studious & moral conduct of the young men will now bear a comparison with the best examples in the U.S. But we have been unfortunate in losing

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a Professor of Mathematics, who was a valuable acquisition, and are soon to lose the Professor of Ancient Languages, whose distinguished Competency we can scarcely hope to replace. Both of them were from England, & tho' professing to be friendly to this Country, and doing well in their respective stations, preferred a return to their native home; one of them seduced by an appointment in the new University in London; and the other, it is supposed, by the hope of obtaining an appointment. But the great cause which retards the growth of the Institution, is the pecuniary distress of the State, the effect of scanty crops & reduced prices, with habits of expence the effect of a better state of things. The mass of our people as you know, consists of those who depend on their Agricultural resources, and the failure of these, leaves it in the power of but few parents, to give the desired education to their sons, cheap as it has been made to them. We cherish the hope of a favorable change, but the immediate prospect is not flattering.

My mother, little changed since you saw her recd. with much sensibility your kind remembrance, and charges me with the due returns. Mrs. M. joins me in assurances of every good wish for yourself, your son, and the whole household, with an extension to Mr. Le Vasseur. Most affectionately yrs.