

**James Madison to Nicholas P. Trist, May, 1832.  
Transcription: The Writings of James Madison,  
ed. Gaillard Hunt. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons,  
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**TO N. P. TRIST. MAD. MSS.**

Montpellier , May —, 1832.

Dear Sir I have received your letter of the 8th, with the book referred to and dictate the acknowledgement

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of it to a pen that is near me. I will read the work as soon as I may be able. When that will be I cannot say. I have been confined to my bed many days by a bilious attack. The fever is now leaving me but in a very enfeebled state, and without any abatement of my Rheumatism; which, besides its general effect on my health, still cripples me in my limbs, and especially in my hands & fingers.

I am glad to find you so readily deciding that the charges against Mr. Jefferson can be duly refuted. I doubt not this will be well done. To be so, it will be expedient to review carefully the correspondences of Mr. Jefferson, to recur to the aspects of things at different epochs of the Government, particularly as presented at its outset, in the unrepugnant formalities introduced and attempted, not by President Washington but by the vitiated political taste of others taking the lead on the occasion; and again in the proceedings which marked the Vice Presidency of Mr. Jefferson.

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Allowances also ought to be made for a habit in Mr. Jefferson as in others of great genius of expressing in strong and round terms, impressions of the moment.

It may be added that a full exhibition of the correspondences of distinguished public men through the varied scenes of a long period, would without a *single exception* not fail to involve delicate personalities and apparent if not real inconsistencies.

I heartily wish that something may be done with the tariff that will be admissible on both sides and arrest the headlong course in South Carolina. The alternative presented by the dominant party there is so monstrous that it would seem impossible that it should be sustained by any of the most sympathising States; unless there be latent views apart from Constitutional

questions, which I hope cannot be of much extent. The wisdom that meets the crisis with the due effect will greatly signalize itself.

The idea that a Constitution which has been so fruitful of blessings, and a Union admitted to be the only guardian of the peace, liberty and happiness of the people of the States comprizing it should be broken up and scattered to the winds without greater than any existing causes is more painful than words can express. It is impossible that this can ever be the deliberate act of the people, if the value of the Union be calculated by the consequences of disunion.

I am much exhausted and can only add an affectionate adieu.