

Richmond Jan^y 11th 1785

My dear [Short](#)

I return you a thousand thanks for your friendly favors from Phila & New York, and would certainly have answered the former before you sailed, had I supposed that event sufficiently distant. Must I attribute the delay ^ of it to your apprehensions of the fair passenger, notwithstanding your philosophy? or to the powerful impressions of the terrors of a “tempest”? I foresee that like another “American wanderer” you will fall in love with every hostess’s daughter & Fille de chambre in France.— If you have not seen this [book](#), I desire you will get it— The style is frequently an affected imitation of [Sterne’s](#),— yet ~~it has in my opinion some~~ ^the Author, I think has Genius and Merit.— Let me have your opinion of it, as well as whatever else you meet with—

Your acc^t. of the famous P<...> n [humouris](#) is ~~one~~ ^and the city are two of the many proofs of the liberty which fame takes in exaggerating Characters.

I rejoice at the preference you still give to this state, and, however unphilosophical it may be, feel ~~much~~ ^myself highly gratified by it— But will this affection be ^stand unshaken by the allurements of science, and refinements in arts, which Europe will throw in your way? or is ^not our domestick happiness and near approach to perfect liberty and equality a counterbalance to them? I am anxious for your decision on this point,— and the more so, as you have left this country since the revolution, and are fully sensible of our freedom civil and religious— The attack ^Lately made on the latter, by the attempt to introduce an assessment, has failed— The bill was ~~vetoed~~ rejected by a small majority after the engrossment—

A law establishing assise-courts is passed. This is an event which, I am sure, you will give you ^great pleasure, independent of the private advantage, which you may reap from it, if you return to the bar. It ^is surely a radical reform of ^our late partial administration in the county courts, and ^something similar to it the only system adapted to our extensive country. Yet for the ease of the people ~~in point of~~ ^as to expedition and economy, I wish it were <...> ~~on~~ so far on the district-plan, that the writs shd ~~issue~~ be returnable, the issues made up, and judgements (except in points of law) ~~made up in~~ ^entered at the assise, ~~court, as they are to be on~~ ^instead of the genl court— The operation of the law is ~~to begin~~ suspended till April 1786.

Opening a communication with the western-country, by of extending the navigation of James-River and Potowmack, has ^lately engrossed much of the publick attention ~~here~~ here.— [Genl Washington](#) proposed the plan to the [Governor](#)— Maryland cooperates with us as to Potowmack— Money is voted and companies incorporated by each state, with a grant of toll to the subscribers.

Our revenue seems to be in a flourishing state— we have made ample appropriations for all demands, particularly for ~~foreign debts, for which, an addition~~ ^those due to foreigners, having added to the tax on process, the acreage of the tax of ^for 1783 and the produce of the sale of the Gosport-lands ~~are appropriated~~— There is one species of foreign debts however ^for paying which no provision is made, nor even legal impediments to their recovery removed. I mean the British Debts. The ~~evening before~~ ^day on which the house was to adjourn, several members were detained on the south-side of the river. They tried unsuccessfully for several days to form an house— The same obstacle remained, and at length the members dispersed leaving that and some other bills unfinished, which had passed both houses,— but had not been reported to the house of delegates, enrolled, or signed by the Speakers— Some, tho’ I confess contrary to my idea, think they may still be acted on.

[M^r. Jo: Jones](#) is y^r successor at our board, as [Mr Selden](#) and [M^r. Roane](#) are to [Mr Smith](#) and [M^r. Christian](#).

Our friend [B R](#) has lately had a severe fit of the gout, and is scarcely now recovered. His [^]family has met also with an accident, which would have very much deranged one less amiable and philosophic. The old mansion at Chatsworth is level with the earth. [^]However They live happily in one of the offices, where on your return you may take vengeance for the beating I gave you at chess, when I had [^]last the pleasure of seeing you there. This I expect will be done with a marked pawn, or I shall claim the game—

Present my respectful compliments to [M^r. Jefferson](#). Remember me to any of the officers of the French-army of our acquaintance that you may meet with, particularly the [C^t Rochambeau](#), his [son](#), [Genl Chastellux](#), Generals [Veomenil](#), the [knight of Malta](#), whose name I have forgot, [Duplessis](#), and the Messrs [Tarle](#).

and believe me,

with the utmost,

sincerity, yrs

[WmNelsonjr.](#)

PS.

The Gentleman who brings this is [Mr L'atill](#) He [^]who has been settling some accounts with this state for [^]Mr. De [Beaumarchais](#)—

I send you a list of acts passed during the late session

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