

July 18th.

1786 —

Dear [Sir](#) —

By the hurry which mark'd my last letter to [Mr Jefferson](#) you will conclude I was much pressed for time; when I took my pen that morning, it was my determination to have answered yours of the 30th. of May, but I was not able to carry my intentions into effect I lamented it at the time, but when I received yours of the 13th. inst I lamented it no longer— for it always gives me pleasure when I can furnish my friends with an opportunity of shining; especially when they can with propriety boast of the combined good qualities of the head and heart— your goodness, generosity, and friendly disposition is rendered so conspicuous in your last, that you have almost reconciled me to myself, for my long silence— but I will not hereafter put your goodness to the further proof— I will be satisfied with this trial of it, and be more punctual in my reply's— you seem not to be at a loss by yours of the 30th. of May to account for an expression in my last— where I say the politicks of this Country at present is not worth our attention— for I find your opinion on that subject similar to my own— but you say you can divine what Intelligence I expect to receive that may make it worth while to speak of their Politicks hereafter— this may be thus explained— I had then— and indeed still have, so much confidence in the wisdom of My Country, as daily to expect information, that such arrangements are made by the particular States as to furnish Congress with sufficient revenues— established on a solid basis— to answer the exigencies of our Government, to enable them fully to comply with their European engagements and to make such further arrangements as will in a few years embrace the whole of their domestic debt.— I further expect that sufficient powers will be transferred to enable Congress to make permanent arrangements for the Commerce of our Country so as to bring over our foederal abilities to a point and introduce them to a dignified operation, then my friend it may answer so \leftarrow me purpose for us to attend to the operation of the politicks of others — for then, we shall have it in our power to start (if necessary) counter-projects and carry them into effect— but at present an attention to them only perplexes and frets the mind, as we have it not in our power to punish their folly— this term is strong— but I think if ever a nation was running the career of folly, this may be said to move in the same path— passion holds the reigns of Government and Chagrene and disappointed ambition overshadows their path — but still they press forward in full career, and seem driving off from the very Country and people who have it most in their power to serve them and promote their real interest— in Short I think them a divot'd people, pressing rapidly to their destruction— and I believe that upon their Conduct in the present case as it relates to America depends very much the rapidity of their decline— their Navigation act they consider as the great pillar of their national importance and seem determined to adhere to it thro' every vicitude of fortune, here I think they are deceiving themselves— for an examination it is found that 2/3 of their commercial Navigation was supplied from America at a rate as much cheaper than ships could be built in the Thames or elsewhere as 20 to 30— it was noticed formerly in times of friendship and good humour to increase and derive its respectability from the abilities of America, and a considerable proportion of their naval power was nourished from the same abundant spring— I have not yet been able to discover from whence on their present plan they are to make up for the loss— another circumstance strikes me as well worthy of their attention, they not only deprive themselves of the former supplies, but they force that particular commerce in the Channels of those whose powers must be increased in proportion \wedge and who have always been their rivals the one as a Naval Power & the other as Carriers it operates doubly disadvantageous to this People for they not only deprive themselves of it but they force it into ^{those} other scales; for the Americans, particularly the Eastern and Northern are a nation of ship builders, it is what thousands before the war looked to for subsistence— it is what they will naturally return to, and if the former doors are shut against them, they will seek others, and others will be opened chearfully — for they can supply the world much cheaper than any other people, and much better; for they are noted for particular ingenuity in this Branch of

business, & cannot be rivaled— There is another circumstance, they boast that estimating their Commerce by the numbers of Ships employed and it is in a more flourishing State than ever it has been; this pro tem: I'll grant— but are they ships of this or other countries? a very considerable proportion of them are American bottoms— bought before or taken in the time of the War, together with French & Dutch Vessels which they took and a Number of transports sold by Government at the peace, & which were built here during the War at the immense premium of 30 p^r. Cent— this stock must be daily lessening— perhaps you may inform me from France— for I cannot learn in England where they are to draw future supplies particularly if the liberality of our Governments should take off the pressure from the Tories, which will go a great way towards breaking up their settlements in the north, and begin to turn their thoughts to an American Marine— this opens an extensive field— but I wont trespass further on your patience

I am much pleased with your observations on the departure of our friend David from Paris— Indulge reflections of that kind, & my hopes of you will revive— well it is out, and I cannot erase it— to be candid my friend I am a little uneasy about you— I fear you will find the adieu a jamais [final farewell] which you must sooner or later bid to — Paris, and the je ne le verrai plus [I will never see him again] will make you tremble in reality — you will find occasion for the exercise of all the reason & philosophy you can command to bear you superior to the shock— therefore take the advise of a friend and by degrees endeavour to make M^r. Jefferson your constant Companion and your moments of domestic retirement your greatest sources of pleasure you will find it a system the pursuit of which will please on reflection and enable you to return to your Country with pleasure rather than regret— this I know you'll excuse— which would our friend David give at this moment— had this been his career instead of that which he run— Gads he would tear his beard— could he reclaim the moments— the conditions you fix to the change proposed is more impossible — I shall not visit Paris— but you may visit London, and if I thought it would do you as much good as it did David, I would almost leave my friend here and take a trip across the Channel to fetch you— but of this no more— I at this moment feel an attachment for Espagnol and if he is not better engaged you may send him to me, I think his wages are too high but you may arrange that, contract with him & I'll do whatever you think right on this business, but be explicit with him before you make the detachment,— here I broke off for a moment and ascended the Grades— crucified the quadrangle and made a profound bow to Madam— communicated the proposal and asked her advice— this is doing things as we say in America like a good husband — the lady assented but could not suppress a wish that Petit was disengaged for she had had proofs of his fidelity & abilities ⁱⁿ the line we want a person to move in, ie, as Major Domo— superintending the table & by etc, I mean that he will do every thing that is required of him but he suits and is suited too well where he is to expect he will soon be disengaged— therefore I tell the Lady as we Yankies say, she cannot count upon him— & Espagnol may do, if like Le fleur. he brings "all the dispositions in the world" with him— but I wish you to communicate speedily with me on this subject, it would be as well to let me know the terms in which he can come if he is disengaged— this will make every thing clear —

Now permit me to thank you for the not adhering to ~~your~~^{the} resolutions ~~in not~~ you had made, not to write to ~~you~~ me before I had answered yours of the 30th. it was perfectly like yourself, and the supposed reason for my silence was good, for I have "like Martha of old been busy about many things"— you seem anxious to know something of this change, and spent prettyly on the subject when you request information of the sensations the change has produced, and the Ideas it impresses on the mind— words cannot convey it to you; but with a purity of mind you ^{may} form a sufficient Idea of it, to entice you to make the experiment yourself— it is a change that reason approves of and virtue smiles upon— it becomes every hour more interesting, and convinces me of the propriety of my plan and pursuit of happiness; it has furnished me with, the mens sibi conscia recti [a mind aware of its own correctness] and I particularly recommend the journey to you, it is pleasant and will bear reflection—

My friend joins me in thanks for your congratulations and for your sake hopes it will not be long before you may have it in your power to put your good resolutions on this subject into execution— I have not heard from our friend David, but I have heard of— his safe arrival at New York— his return I think some time hence may be expected, if he is prudent when there, the other Gentleman you mention, I am informed has over-shot his mark already— he has been flourishing & carryed with him some of the airs of greatness ~~with him~~ to New York, which have had an effect — this I lament for I am informed he has Merit— it is a pitty that young Gentlemen by being a few months or Years abroad, will return with Ideas that in consequence of their excursion they are superior to others, however true it may be, it would be wise & polite, to keep the favourable opinion to one's self, for a time— present me most respectfully to Madam De Tesse and assure her of my obligations for her polite enquiries, and joining the fair Grecian ~~withal~~ say I often recollect with pleasure the agreeable evening I passed at her mansion— Langborne is here, but not having seen him since I receiv'd yours I have not had an opportunity of communicating the melancholy situation of the Palais-royal— I dont know what to think of the African Ambassadors— But their Expedition, will not bear thinking of; it never pleased me in any point of view I have not had an opportunity of talking with M^r. Randall since his return— What M^r. Jackson is this who is said by the papers to have arrived at L'Orient as Consul General etc etc?— if there is such a Gentleman, what is to become of Mr Barclay when he returns, which in all human probability if he's active may be in the course of a year or 2— & what will little frank do when he comes back & tell me whether you are not delighted with my stoping here— yours

W. S. Smith

I must however introduce the Bearer as Worthy of your acquaintance etc etc etc etc etc etc etc

Ed. notes: Short's letters of 30 May and 13 July 1786 have not been located.

Apparently neither William Short nor William Smith had a high opinion of William Temple Franklin. We have linked "little frank" to his name as a pejorative term that may have been used by Smith, although this is uncertain.

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