

William Short to Thomas Jefferson, January 29, 1795 , from Thomas Jefferson and William Short Correspondence, Transcribed and Edited by Gerard W. Gawalt, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress

William Short to Thomas Jefferson

Madrid Jan. 29, 1795

My dear Sir

The last letter which I have had the pleasure of receiving from you was of the 23 of Dec. 1793. It came to my hands on the 26 of April 1794. It acknowledged my letters private down to that of the 7th of October 1793 inclusive. This statement will give you some idea of the great defalcation to be made in the pleasure I fondly anticipated on your kind soothing & friendly correspondence after retiring from public life. Few persons have ever had more need than I have constantly had of such relief from the time of my hard destiny having placed me in the diplomatic career & I myself have never had more need thereof than since the moment of your return to Monticello & from which you have discontinued your letters altogether. I always regretted their rarity. I have now to regret their loss entire. But I beg you to be assured my dear sir that however painful these regrets may be to me, they can in no way alter or diminish my invariable attachment to you, & my grateful sense of the numberless marks of friendship which you have so long & on so many occasions shewn me.

Posterior to my letter of Oct. 7. 1793 acknowledged by you as above mentioned I wrote to you Nov. 7. 11th & 13th of the same year. After such a rapid succession of letters I determined to wait without troubling you again until I should be in some degree authorized

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thereto by hearing from you. This determination was confirmed & continued by the uncertainty on which I remained as to your continuance in or retiring from public life-& as to my own destination. I went on in this way from day to day until I recieved the letter of your successor & your own of the month of Jany. 1794 which was soon after followed by your previous private of Dec. 23 above mentioned-& this again was soon followed by a report which left me more than even uncertain as to the place or situation in which my letters would find you. That report confirmed in a considerable degree by a letter from Mr. Pinckney as mentioned in the letter I wrote you on the 22 of May last, was that you were named to succeed Mr. Morris at Paris. This agreeable illusion continued for a long time. You may well judge of all the pain & mortification I experienced when this illusion was removed & when I learned what had been done in that respect. I felt more than ever-but contrary to my former usage I abstained from troubling you with my useless Jeremiads. I was sure however that if I allowed myself to write to you, my bosom would open itself however involuntarily & lay before you all I felt at seeing myself again passed over in the appointment for Paris (after I had so long resided here & been employed in the diplomatic career) by a person who was an utter stranger to the country-to the usages & even to the language there spoken & who had never been before in this career. I avoided therefore writing to you all

as the amour propre of everyone is ingenious & industrious in sending out cures for the wounds it receives mine suggested to me that this appointment was withheld from me, under the grounds which gave me a right to expect it from the circumstance of my being supposed disagreeable to the French Government which I had reason to believe was admitted by our Government from what you had formerly written to me. Some reason there must be of that kind-for whatever may be the talents, virtues & abilities of the person appointed (& nobody can have an higher idea of them than I have) yet the ignorance of the Country & of the language placed him necessarily in such a comparative situation with me acquainted with both, as could never have given a preference unless where there were some great & irremediable demerit & incapacity in the latter. After all such things

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are merely relative & had you been named as was reported, I should have been the last person in the world to have supposed that this argued any demerit in myself in the eyes of the President.

To leave myself out of the question I will add only one word & that is that in these times there is no Government in Europe which would have made such a passee droit in favor of any person who had never before been in the diplomatic line above all those employed by them & who had devoted themselves to an apprenticeship in that line. Formerly such things were done by those Governments in favor or rank or birth -at present it is only the Government of the U.S. that ventures to adopt such a system. An enquiry into what they have done in this line would for a rapprochement that would aid in the history of the progress of the human heart-I mean of the heart when at the head of governments & would elucidate the following questions applied to the U.S. which were some time ago proposed in the French convention as to France.—d'ou venens nous? ou sommes nous? ou allons nous?

To return from this digression which I may perhaps be ere long in a situation & at leisure to examine & developpe more fully. I received my nomination together with the information of that for Paris, under circumstances which did not admit of my refusing it, notwithstanding all the pain & anxiety I had been previously condemned to & notwithstanding all my health had suffered & was still suffering. One of the strongest inducements with me was the desire & determination to leave nothing untried to obtain for the inhabitants of Kentucky in particular & for the U.S. in general those rights which they are entitled, which I am sure they will never desist from & which time & circumstances inevitably insure them. If by my efforts I could have shortened that time or have rendered the means peaceable I should have considered myself indemnified for all I had suffered & though this would in some degree

wipe away that kind of imputation of demerit which could not fail to attach to me in the eyes of my countrymen . From the manner in which the President has acted towards me in

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constantly giving others the preference to me, & employing me only in the lowest grades & least honorable manner. I have now received a letter from the Sec. of State of the 9th of Nov. which fills up the measure which the President has determined on all occasions to deal out to me. I am there informed that he means on the meeting of the Senate to send Mr. Pinckney here as Env. Extr. to terminate the business hitherto in my hands. He mentions that you and Mr. P. Henry had both refused the mission. I infer from his letter that Mr. Pinckney is to be employed alone, viz. to say that his name only is to appear, although he mentions to me that my corroboration will be asked &c. The Sec. of State pays me more compliments on one hand & thus humiliates me on the other. This however is the treatment I have been accustomed to for years back, & is not new to me but what is new is to learn from him that such extraordinary missions are familiar in the diplomatic line. I know not where the sec. of State has taken up this idea, but I pledge myself to shew in time & place if necessary that the annals of diplomatie do not furnish an example of such an one if as I suppose I am after two years occupation thus excluded from it, & at the same time retained here & if it be added that when I was sent here I was joined in a commission although the business was to be taken up above where as now at the end of the labor, another is sent to enjoy the fruits of it alone. I Forebear at present saying any thing more on this head. I have strived on all occasion by my zeal & activity to merit well of the President. I have not with repeated humiliation & constant slight. I blame my own steps. I am waiting the arrival of Mr. Pinckney to take my final decision or rather to execute it. I wish him most sincerely full success in his mission & indeed that is already secured by existing circumstances. Although similar, to my usual fortune that at the very moment of attaining the goal I should be wrested from the race & another put in my place for the sole purpose of enjoying the fruit. Although personally this cannot but be a painful circumstance to me, yet I never have as yet, & trust I never shall, allow anything personal to weigh against the advantage of my country. Mr. Pinckney has therefore my best wishes & if I can aid him, or at least if he should think so, he shall have my best efforts also & this will be the last act of my public life, & I think not the least meritorious when it is considered in what an unexampled manner I am treated.

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The Sec. of state tells me that the president had under consideration the diplomattick grade to be employed here. I have written often on this subject, because I felt that it interested much more essentially the U.S. then was considered by Government. The grade however never has had & will not now have consideration with me.

Being certain the business would be terminated here during the winter one way or anothe, & my health suffering extremely here during the summer I wrote some months ago (long before I knew or suspected the President's intention of sending an Env. Ext. here) to ask for permission to go & pass the summer in France. I think it certain now I shall not be here to recieve any letter you may in future write to me, as I do not see that the public can suffer from my absence after Mr. Pinckneys arrival. Yet I fear to discourage you from writing. I beg you therefore to write to me & to address your letter to Mr. Yznardi the Consul at Cadiz or Mr. Church, at Lisbon, or Mr. Donald in London, or our agent there who will know where I am to be found. Mr. Pinckney's stay here I take it for granted will be until he can recieve the ratification of the treaty he will sign, which of course will give the President the necessary time for chusing the proper permanent agent. I am waiting his arrival in order to announce to the President my final determination. I see & expect nothing that can prevent that determination being a retreat from public life which has been filled with thorns for me, whilst the roses have been distributed to the more favored. The most pleasing idea which now presents itself to me is that of ere long seeing & embracing my friends in my own country. How happy would it have been for me if I had followed your former wise & friendly counsel in that respect.

I sent you by Mr. Blake who did not sail from Cadiz until the 21st inst. the 8vo Academy edition of Dr. Quixote. Mr. Carmichael who is still here, sent on to Cadiz the edition of Cortez letters which he luckily obtained for you, & he has told me that he had authorized Mr. Blake to open the package & take this book out in order that it might sooner get to your hands.

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In your kind letter of Dec. 23. 1793 you were so good as to inform me of the State in which my funds were & to mention your ideas of vesting them in different ways. I have been waiting with much pleasure to learn the execution of your intentions. It would be a most agreeable circumstance to me, but I will not importune you respecting it. Although I take it for granted you will have written to me on that subject. By an arrangement of the Sec. of State with Mr. Jaudenes I have been obliged to receive this years salary & outfit in America. I desired him to pay the cash to you or to have it vested for me himself in our funds. His letter of Nov. 9 informs me he had begun that investment & would send me the acct. as soon as completed. I am in the mean time living on my own funds & credit. Should the Sec. of State turn these funds over to you I will thank you to manage them for me as you do those you have hither to received.

I long most ardently & every day more & more to see my native land. I have forborne writing to you respecting the new federal city. I fear it is too late for criticism but I lament most sincerely the great & irreparable defects which experience will shew in the plan. Your
W. Short

RC (Jefferson Papers, DLC)