

**Thomas Jefferson to Joel Barlow, April 16, 1811, from
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Ford.**

TO JOEL BARLOW J. MSS.

Monticello, April 16, 1811.

Dear Sir, —I felicitate you sincerely on your destination to Paris, because I believe it will contribute both to your happiness and the public good. Yet it is not unmixed with regret. What is to become of our past revolutionary history? Of the antidotes of truth to the misrepresentations of Marshall? This example proves the wisdom of the maxim, never to put off to to-morrow what can be done to-day. But, putting aside vain regrets, I shall be happy to hear from you in your new situation. I cannot offer you in exchange the minutiae of the Cabinet, the workings in Congress, or under-workings of those around them. General views are all which we at a distance can have, but general views are sometimes better taken at a distance than nearer. The working of the whole machine is sometimes better seen elsewhere than at its centre. In return you can give me the true state of things in Europe, what is its real public mind at present, its disposition towards the existing authority, its secret purposes and future prospects, seasoned with the literary news. I do not propose this as an equal barter, because it is really asking you to give a dollar for a shilling. I must leave the difference to be made up from other motives. I have been long waiting for a safe opportunity to write to some friends and correspondents in France. I troubled Mr. Warden with some letters, and he kindly offered to take all I could get ready before his departure. But his departure seems not yet definitely settled, and should he what is in your hands will be less liable to violation than in his. I therefore take the liberty

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of asking your care of the letters now enclosed, and their delivery through confidential hands. Most of them are of a complexion not proper for the eye of the police, and might do injury to those to whom they are addressed. Wishing to yourself and Mrs. Barlow a happy voyage, and that the execution of the duties of your mission may be attended with all agreeable circumstances, I salute you with assurance of my perfect esteem and respect.