

James Madison to George Washington, August 12, 1784. Transcription: The Writings of James Madison, ed. Gaillard Hunt. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1900-1910.

TO GENERAL WASHINGTON. WASH. MSS.

Orange Augst 12, 1784

Dear Sir, —I had the honor of receiving your favor of the 12th of June during my attendance on the Legislature, and of answering it a few days, before I left Richmond. Since my return home I have been informed that the gentleman into whose hands the answer was put has mislaid or lost it, and that I cannot rely on its ever finding its way to you. I have therefore to repeat, Sir, that the sanction which your judgment gave to the propriety of rewarding the literary services of Mr. Payne,¹ led to an attempt in the House of Delegates for that purpose. The proposition first made was, that he should be invested with a moiety of a tract of public land known by the name of the Secretary's lying on the Eastern Shore. The kind reception given to this proposition induced some gentlemen to urge that the whole tract containing about 500 acres might be included in the donation, as more becoming the dignity of the State, and not exceeding the merits of the object. The proposition thus enlarged passed through two readings without apprehension on the part of its friends.—On the third, a sudden attack grounded on considerations of economy and suggestions unfavourable to Mr. Payne threw the Bill out of the house. The next idea proposed

¹ Madison wrote to Washington on this subject July 2d less fully than in this letter. For Washington's suggestion that something should be done for "poor Paine," see his letter of June 12, 1784, to Madison, *Writings of Washington*, x., 393, and for Jefferson's opinion

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of the action of the Assembly, Jefferson to Madison, December 8, 1784, *Writings of Jefferson*, iv., 17.

was that the land in question should be sold and £2000 of the proceeds

allotted to Mr. Payne to be laid out in the purchase of a farm if he should think fit. This was lost by a single vote. Whether a succeeding Session may resume the matter, and view it in a different light, is not for me to say. Should exertions of genius which have been everywhere admired, and in America unanimously acknowledged, not save the author from indigence & distress, the loss of national character will hardly be balanced by the savings at the Treasury.

With the highest respect &c.