

**Thomas Jefferson to Freres Coster and Company,
May 21, 1793, from The Works of Thomas Jefferson in
Twelve Volumes. Federal Edition. Collected and Edited
by Paul Leicester Ford.**

TO MESSRS. COSTER, FRERES & CO. J. MSS.

Philadelphia May 21, 1793.

Gentlemen, —I have duly received and considered your favor of the 17th inst complaining that the French privateer, the *Young Mary*, commanded by Phil. Evernent, seized your vessel, the brig *Revolution* commanded by John H. Shackerly, carried her into Ostend, & there detained her some time, & praying an indemnification. As it is to be presumed the French privateer had orders to cruise on the *enemies* of France only, any violation committed on the vessel of a *friend*, as that complained of by you, would be out of her orders, & not imputable to her sovereign, it is the nature of a trespass, and states are not answerable for the unauthorized trespasses committed by their citizens. All that can be asked of them is to punish them. This we have a right to expect will be done on your prosecution of the matter. Nations however, in their treaties, take another measure to guard their citizens against the irregularities of privateers. They stipulate with each other that no commission shall be issued by either to a privateer without sufficient security taken to indemnify the sufferers by their irregularities. There is such a stipulation in our treaty with France, & we have no doubt that Capt Evernent has given security in the port from which he issued, to which you can resort for indemnification. It would only be in the case that no such security has been taken, or that justice shall be refused you in resorting to it, that the U. S. could make it a subject of national complaint; for my own, as well as your greater satisfaction, I have communicated your papers to the Attny. Genl. of the U S.

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who concurs with me in the above opinion. I am with great respect Gentlemen Your most
obedt. humble setvt.