

**Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, November 30, 1809, from The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes. Federal Edition. Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester Ford.**

**TO JAMES MADISON J. MSS.**

Monticello, November 30, 1809.

Dear Sir, —I received last night yours of the 27th, and rode this morning to Col. Monroe's. I found him preparing to set out to-morrow morning for London, from whence he will not return till Christmas. I had an hour or two's frank conversation with him. The catastrophe of poor Lewis served to lead us to the point intended. I reminded him that in the letter I wrote to him while in Europe, proposing the Government of Orleans, I also suggested that of Louisiana, if fears for health should be opposed to the other. I said something on the importance of the post, its advantages, &c.—expressed my regret at the curtain which seemed to be drawn between him and his best friends, and my wish to see his talents and integrity engaged in the service of his country again, and that his going into any post would be a signal of reconciliation, on which the body of republicans, who lamented his absence from the public service, would again rally to him. These are the general heads of what I said to him in the course of our conversation. The sum of his answers was, that to accept of that office was incompatible with the respect he owed himself; that he never would act in any office where he should be subordinate to any body but the President himself, or which did not place his responsibility substantially with the President and the nation; that at your accession to the chair, he would have accepted a place in the cabinet, and would have exerted his endeavors most faithfully in support of your fame and measures; that he is not unready to serve the public, and especially in the case of any difficult crisis in

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our affairs; that he is satisfied that such is the deadly hatred of both France and England, and such their self reproach and dread at the spectacle of such a government as ours, that they will spare nothing to destroy it; that nothing but a firm union among the whole body of republicans can save it, and therefore that no schism should be indulged on any ground; that in his present situation, he is sincere in his anxieties for the success of the administration, and in his

support of it as far as the limited sphere of his action or influence extends; that his influence to this end had been used with those with whom the world had ascribed to him an interest he did not possess, until, whatever it was, it was lost, (he particularly named J. Randolph, who, he said, had plans of his own, on which he took no advice;) and that he was now pursuing what he believed his properest occupation, devoting his whole time and faculties to the liberation of his pecuniary embarrassments, which, three years of close attention, he hoped, would effect. In order to know more exactly what were the kinds of employ he would accept, I adverted to the information of the papers, which came yesterday, that Gen. Hampton was dead, but observed that the military life in our present state, offered nothing which could operate on the principle of patriotism; he said he would sooner be shot than take a command under Wilkinson. In this sketch, I have given truly the substance of his ideas, but not always his own words. On the whole, I conclude he would accept a place in the cabinet, or a military command dependent on the Executive alone, and I rather suppose a diplomatic mission, because it would fall within the scope of his views, and not because he said so, for no allusion was made to anything of that kind in our conversation. Everything from him breathed the purest patriotism, involving, however, a close attention to his own honor and grade. He expressed himself with the utmost devotion to the interests of our own country, and I am satisfied he will pursue them with honor and zeal in any character in which he shall be willing to act.

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I have thus gone far beyond the single view of your letter, that you may, under any circumstances, form a just estimate of what he would be disposed to do. God bless you, and carry you safely through all your difficulties.