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Introduction

THOMAS JEFFERSON SAW HIMSELF as, and desperately wanted to be seen as, a progressive—a man of the future always on the lookout for the new improvements that science and the education of the general population would inevitably bring. During his famous late-in-life correspondence with John Adams, he wrote that he “like[d] the dreams of the future better than the history of the past.” In that same letter, he predicted that the United States would take the lead in standing guard against the “return of bigotry and barbarism,” because “Old Europe” would still be under the influence of Old World structures and beliefs. Although he wrote those words as an elderly man, the evidence indicates that he held this view about an inevitably progressive future from his youth.

The times in which Jefferson lived sparked and nurtured his ideas about the nature of progress. He was enormously influenced by the Enlightenment philosophy of the eighteenth century, which promoted reason and the scientific approach to life as the guiding principles for humankind. Driving this point home, Jefferson said that he considered “Sir Francis Bacon, Sir Isaac Newton and Sir John Locke” his “trinity of the three greatest men the world has ever produced.” All three, of course, are considered giants of Enlightenment thinking. This way of viewing the world meant questioning cherished notions that were in opposition to reason—including casting a suspicious eye toward religion, being willing to sew doubt about the wisdom of set hierarchies, and being willing to upset

established orders. Throughout his life, Jefferson exhibited a healthy skepticism about religion and hierarchy, and he was willing to upset established orders.

The Enlightenment also emphasized the value of liberty and equality. This was a challenging concept in a world dominated by monarchy and established churches, institutions that worked together to maintain a type of stability and order in given societies. Jefferson was born into a world in which monarchy and an established church were facts of life. There would be no reason for him to doubt the rightness of the government under which he lived, or the religious practices of his family and his neighbors. The British had, with the Glorious Revolution of 1688, changed the nature of their monarchy by strengthening the power of Parliament and lessening the power of the king. This was done, in part, as move against despotic rule and to support greater liberty and justice. It was, in that broad sense, in keeping with the Enlightenment.

While the British were forming their ideas about liberty for those who lived in the British Isles and in their colonies, they were also taking steps to establish African chattel slavery in North America and the West Indies. In the decade before Jefferson was born, the Virginia colony had reached its high point of importation of Africans. Thus, slavery existed in a world where British people had developed a heightened awareness of the idea of liberty and were professed enemies of despotism. The historian Edmund S. Morgan sought to explain this “paradox” in his magisterial work *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia*. The existence of slavery, he said, supported the “liberty” that White Virginians enjoyed. How so? The existence of a Black permanent underclass tamped down on the class conflict and competition that would normally have existed among White colonials. Poor Whites would always count themselves as possessing British liberty because they could never occupy the status of enslaved Blacks. Rather than being resentful of their economic and social “betters,” they would tend to see themselves as in solidarity with them.

Jefferson was an interesting case. Virginia, the land of his birth, was the very site of the paradox that Morgan described in *American Slavery, American Freedom*. The social, economic, and legal

system worked to the great benefit of his prominent family. It would have been a simple matter for him to have accepted the terms of this social arrangement without question and gone about his life. But he did not. And the evidence indicates that his critique of this arrangement started early on, well before the American Revolution opened up a broader discussion about the nature of freedom and slavery. The scholar Douglas Wilson put it this way:

How did a man who was born into a slave holding society, whose family and admired friends owned slaves, who inherited a fortune that was dependent on slaves and slave labor, decide at an early age that slavery was morally wrong and forcefully declare that it ought to be abolished?

One of the great losses to American history is the destruction of early Jefferson documents in the fire that took place at his boyhood home in 1775. It destroyed what could have been revealing documents from Jefferson's early years. So, we will likely never know the precise moment that young Thomas decided that slavery was a problem. Nor can we discern a contemporaneous view of his attitude toward Black people in his statements about individual Blacks he encountered during this period of his life. The basic outlines of his early beginnings really give no hint of the genesis of his views about the slavery of African American people.

Jefferson was born on April 13 (O.S. April 2), 1743, at his family's plantation in Goochland (now Albemarle) County, Virginia. His father, Peter Jefferson, was a surveyor and a planter, something of a self-made man who rose to prominence in his community. Jefferson's mother, Jane, was a member the more well-known and numerous Randolph family, which had a long history in Virginia. Although the house in which Jefferson grew up with his numerous siblings was nowhere as large as the house he would build at Monticello, archaeological evidence and written records of the family reveal that the Jeffersons lived the life of upper-class people. They ordered cloth and shoes from England and had the family's clothes made by tailors.

Although Peter Jefferson's education had been "quite neglected," Thomas Jefferson noted that his father worked hard at self-improvement and created a library that sparked young Thomas's interest in reading and education. Peter Jefferson, who died in 1757

when Thomas was fourteen years old, made sure that his son had a first-rate early education through tutors and boarding school. The earliest correspondence we have from Thomas Jefferson is a letter to one of his guardians requesting that he be able to attend the College of William and Mary. It was written the same years his father died.

It was at William and Mary that we find a hint of Jefferson's adherence to Enlightenment views. He studied under William Small, who taught mathematics, science, and philosophy. The Scottish Small was a devotee of the Enlightenment, and Jefferson viewed him as an important figure to his development. In his autobiography, Jefferson praised Small's "enlarged & liberal mind" and viewed Small as an important mentor.

Small introduced Jefferson to a man who would play an even greater role in his life, George Wythe, a noted lawyer, judge, and signer of the Declaration of Independence. Jefferson studied law under Wythe for five years. In addition to being a supporter of Enlightenment philosophy, Wythe was antislavery, even though he enslaved people until the last decade of his life. Jefferson considered Wythe like a father. Perhaps his dear friend and mentor's position as a critic of slavery while holding slaves helped Jefferson accommodate himself to this way of being. It is hard to imagine that these two people, who were so close to one another, did not discuss the issue of slavery. As we will see later in this volume, the matter hit home to the pair in the most personal and poignant way.

The documents in this section show Jefferson, in both his private life and public life, attempting to live his vision of himself as an enlightened individual, starting as a young man, presenting his views—explicitly and implicitly—on the subjects of slavery and race. Perhaps his earliest notation that relates to the subjects is a stanza of a poem written by William Shenstone that Jefferson copied into his memorandum book when he was in his twenties, which he titled "Inscription for an African Slave." It appeared along with an inscription for his favorite sister Jane's gravestone. The Shenstone stanza is part of poem that tells the story of an African torn from his homeland and brought across the sea to do unpaid labor for other people and be treated as an item of property. It is not known whether the passage in the poem was for an individual enslaved person at Monticello or whether it was to serve as a general state-

ment for the burial ground as a whole. But this was before Jefferson the public man, who would become aware of his contemporary image to the world at large and be concerned about the ways in which posterity might view his legacy.

Perhaps the most famous documents in this section are Jefferson's correspondence with Benjamin Banneker, an African American astronomer and almanac writer. Banneker wrote to Jefferson in 1791, sending him a copy of his almanac and requesting his aid in dealing with the issue of slavery and improving the status of Black people. Banneker noted that Jefferson had a reputation as one who would be amenable to his entreaty. Jefferson responded quickly, thanking Banneker for the almanac and saying that he had forwarded it to the Marquis de Condorcet. Jefferson's cordial response, signing off as "Your most obedt. Humble Servant," drew derision from enemies, who suggested that he had demeaned himself with the respectful valediction and that he was gullible in believing that Banneker had done the work for the almanac on his own. This last charge got to Jefferson, and, as we will see in the last section of this book, "Actions and Interactions," he attempted to backtrack by suggesting that Banneker had received help in preparing his almanac. Perhaps because he was so sure of his position, and because it reinforced his view of himself as a fair-minded individual, Jefferson never had a problem extending small courtesies to people of color, using honorifics like Mr. or Mrs. and the valediction in the Banneker letter. Members of his cohort took these types of things more seriously than he.

Although there is no written record of his involvement, Jefferson insisted over the course of his life that he was partly responsible for having introduced early legislation in the House of Burgesses to strike blows against slavery. Given his record otherwise, there is no reason to doubt him on this point. But even more important for our consideration is the fact that Jefferson *wanted* to be associated with antislavery efforts. He could easily have emphasized other achievements or, like most of his cohort, not associated himself with the question at all. He could have achieved everything he did without it. This indicates that he knew the institution was a problem and would be seen as a problem for succeeding generations. He wanted

people in his time, and later generations, to see him as having been on the right side of that issue.

And then there is the Jefferson who periodically latched onto quixotic methods to attack slavery or at least to make it more palatable. Letters and notations in his *Farm Book* and *Memorandum Book* show his enthusiasm for sugar from maple trees, seeing this as a way to potentially destroy West Indian slavery, on which the Caribbean sugarcane industry was so dependent. He substituted sugar from maple trees for cane sugar at his residences and made an unsuccessful attempt to grow maple at Monticello. He especially liked the idea because it would unite morality with self-interest. The horrors of the cane field could be avoided *and* the United States, at least those regions that had the climate for it, might be able to produce a salable crop. And then there was the plan to grow olive trees on the Mountain, to provide less strenuous work for enslaved women. These types of actions are akin to methods individual citizens in modern times employ to combat huge systemic problems that would actually require deep sacrifices that the concerned citizens would be reluctant to endure.

In letters to family and friends, in notations in the memorandum notes that he made daily, in writings that ended up in the public sphere, in gestures toward individual people of color, enslaved and free, we see Jefferson attempting to live out his own beliefs about his character. This mixture of private and public gives a window into Jefferson's view of himself. The record ranges from the time he had no reason to think that he would become a figure remembered in history to the time he was an elder statesman certain that he would be remembered. *How* he was remembered mattered a great deal to him. Jefferson wanted to make sure that his legacy on this matter signaled that he was the progressive person that he so wanted to be.

Notes

1. Jefferson to John Adams, August 1, 1816, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson (PTJ)* (Retirement Series) 10:285.
2. Jefferson to John Trumbull, February 15, 1789, *PJT* 14:561.

3. Douglas L. Wilson, "Thomas Jefferson and the Character Issue," *Atlantic Monthly*, November 1992, 57-74.
4. Thomas Jefferson, *Autobiography*, Yale Avalon Project Online.
5. Jefferson, *Autobiography*.
6. Annette Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello: An American Family* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2008), 381, 716n11.

Documents

Inscription for an African Slave

Shores there are, bless'd shores for us remain,
And favor'd isles with golden fruitage crown'd
Where tufted flow'rets paint the verdant plain,
Where ev'ry breeze shall med'cine ev'ry wound.
There the stern tyrant that embitters life,
Shall vainly suppliant, spread his asking hand;
There shall we view the billow's raging strife,
Aid the kind breast, and waft his boat to land.

Summary View of the Rights of British America (1774)

That we next proceed to consider the conduct of his majesty, as holding the executive powers of the laws of these states, and mark out his deviations from the line of duty: By the constitution of Great Britain, as well as of the several American states, his majesty possesses the power of refusing to pass into a law any bill which has already passed the other two branches of legislature. His majesty, however, and his ancestors, conscious of the impropriety of opposing their single opinion to the united wisdom of two houses of parliament, while their proceedings were unbiassed by interested principles, for several ages past have modestly declined the exercise of this power in that part of his empire called Great Britain. But

by change of circumstances, other principles than those of justice simply have obtained an influence on their determinations; the addition of new states to the British empire has produced an addition of new, and sometimes opposite interests. It is now, therefore, the great office of his majesty, to resume the exercise of his negative power, and to prevent the passage of laws by any one legislature of the empire, which might bear injuriously on the rights and interests of another. Yet this will not excuse the wanton exercise of this power which we have seen his majesty practise on the laws of the American legislatures. For the most trifling reasons, and sometimes for no conceivable reason at all, his majesty has rejected laws of the most salutary tendency. The abolition of domestic slavery is the great object of desire in those colonies, where it was unhappily introduced in their infant state. But previous to the enfranchisement of the slaves we have, it is necessary to exclude all further importations from Africa; yet our repeated attempts to effect this by prohibitions, and by imposing duties which might amount to a prohibition, have been hitherto defeated by his majesty's negative: Thus preferring the immediate advantages of a few African corsairs to the lasting interests of the American states, and to the rights of human nature, deeply wounded by this infamous practice. Nay, the single interposition of an interested individual against a law was scarcely ever known to fail of success, though in the opposite scale were placed the interests of a whole country. That this is so shameful an abuse of a power trusted with his majesty for other purposes, as if not reformed, would call for some legal restrictions.

*Language Congress Excised from TJ's Draft
of the Declaration of Independence, 1776*

. . . he has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating it's most sacred rights of life & liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, captivating & carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere, or to incur miserable death in their transportation thither. This piratical warfare, the opprobrium of *infidel* powers, is the warfare of the CHRISTIAN king of Great Britain. Determined to keep open a market where MEN should be bought

& sold, he has prostituted his negative for suppressing every legislative attempt to prohibit or to restrain this execrable commerce: and that this assemblage of horrors might want no fact of distinguished die, he is now exciting those very people to rise in arms among us, and to purchase that liberty of which *he* has deprived them, by murdering the people upon whom *he* also obtruded them; thus paying off former crimes committed against the *liberties* of one people, with crimes which he urges them to commit against the *lives* of another.

*The Declaration of Independence
as Adopted by Congress*

IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776

*The Unanimous Declaration of the
Thirteen United States of America,*

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. . . . He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions . . .

Bill to Prevent the Importation of Slaves, &c.

[16 June 1777]

To prevent more effectually the practice of holding persons in Slavery and importing them into this State Be it enacted by the General Assembly that all persons who shall be hereafter imported into this

Commonwealth by Sea or Land whether they were bond or free in their native Country upon their taking the oath of Fidelity to this Commonwealth shall from thenceforth become free and absolutely exempted from all Slavery or Bondage to which they had be subjected in any other State or Country whatsoever. That it shall and may be lawful for any person by Deed duly executed in the presence of two or more Witnesses and acknowledged or proved and recorded in the General Court or Court of the County where he or she resides within eight Months from the making thereof or by their last Will and Testament in writing fully and absolutely to manumit and set at Liberty any Slave or Slaves to which they are entitled, But no Slave absconding from the owner who resides in any of the thirteen united States of America, or any other state in amity with them, and coming into this commonwealth, or coming with the owner to dwell here, or attending him as a Servant, or falling to any Inhabitant of this Commonwealth by Marriage Will or Inheritance and not brought to be sold, shall not become free, And if any Slave manumitted shall, within years thereafter, become chargeable to a Parish, the former owner, or his Executors or Administrators shall be compelled to reimburse the expenses of his or her maintenance, And so much of the Act of general Assembly made in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and fifty three intituled “an act for the better government of Servants and Slaves” as is contrary to this act, is hereby declared to be repealed.

Speech to Jean Baptiste Ducoigne

Brother John Baptist de Coigne

Charlottesville,
[ca. 1] June, 1781.

I am very much pleased with the visit you have made us, and particularly that it has happened when the wise men from all parts of our country were assembled together in council, and had an opportunity of hearing the friendly discourse you held to me. We are all sensible of your friendship, and of the services you have rendered, and I now, for my countrymen, return you thanks, and, most particularly, for your assistance to the garrison which was besieged by the hostile Indians. I hope it will please the Great Being above to continue you long in life, in health and in friendship to us; and

that your son will afterwards succeed you in wisdom, in good disposition, and in power over your people. I consider the name you have given as particularly honorable to me, but I value it the more as it proves your attachment to my country. We, like you, are Americans, born in the same land, and having the same interests. I have carefully attended to the figures represented on the skins, and to their explanation, and shall always keep them hanging on the walls in remembrance of you and your nation. I have joined with you sincerely in smoking the pipe of peace; it is a good old custom handed down by your ancestors, and as such I respect and join in it with reverence. I hope we shall long continue to smoke in friendship together. You find us, brother, engaged in war with a powerful nation. Our forefathers were Englishmen, inhabitants of a little island beyond the great water, and, being distressed for land, they came and settled here. As long as we were young and weak, the English whom we had left behind, made us carry all our wealth to their country, to enrich them; and, not satisfied with this, they at length began to say we were their slaves, and should do whatever they ordered us. We were now grown up and felt ourselves strong; we knew we were free as they were, that we came here of our own accord and not at their bidding, and were determined to be free as long as we should exist. For this reason they made war on us. They have now waged that war six years, and have not yet won more land from us than will serve to bury the warriors they have lost. Your old father, the King of France, has joined us in the war and done many good things for us. We are bound forever to love him, and wish you to love him, brother, because he is a good and true friend to us. The Spaniards have also joined us, and other powerful nations are now entering into the war to punish the robberies and violences the English have committed on them. The English stand alone, without a friend to support them, hated by all mankind because they are proud and unjust. This quarrel, when it first began, was a family quarrel between us and the English, who were then our brothers. We, therefore, did not wish you to engage in it at all. We are strong enough of ourselves without wasting your blood in fighting our battles. The English, knowing this, have been always suing to the Indians to help them fight. We do not wish you to take up the hatchet. We love and esteem you. We wish you to multiply and be strong. The English,

on the other hand, wish to set you and us to cutting one another's throats, that when we are dead they may take all our land. It is better for you not to join in this quarrel, unless the English have killed any of your warriors or done you any other injury. If they have, you have a right to go to war with them, and revenge the injury, and we have none to restrain you. Any free nation has a right to punish those who have done them an injury. I say the same, brother, as to the Indians who treat you ill. While I advise you, like an affectionate friend, to avoid unnecessary war, I do not assume the right of restraining you from punishing your enemies. If the English have injured you, as they have injured the French and Spaniards, do like them and join us in the war. General Clarke will receive you and show you the way to their towns. But if they have not injured you, it is better for you to lie still and be quiet. This is the advice which has been always given by the great council of the Americans. We must give the same, because we are but one of thirteen nations, who have agreed to act and speak together. These nations keep a council of wise men always sitting together, and each of us separately follow their advice. They have the care of all the people and the lands between the Ohio and Mississippi, and will see that no wrong be committed on them. The French settled at Kaskaskias, St. Vincennes, and the Cohos, are subject to that council, and they will punish them if they do you any injury. If you will make known to me any just cause of complaint against them, I will represent it to the great council at Philadelphia, and have justice done you.

Our good friend, your father, the King of France, does not lay any claim to them. Their misconduct should not be imputed to him. He gave them up to the English the last war, and we have taken them from the English. The Americans alone have a right to maintain justice in all the lands on this side the Mississippi,—on the other side the Spaniards rule. You complain, brother, of the want of goods for the use of your people. We know that your wants are great, notwithstanding we have done everything in our power to supply them, and have often grieved for you. The path from hence to Kaskaskias is long and dangerous; goods cannot be carried to you in that way. New Orleans has been the only place from which we could get goods for you. We have bought a great deal there; but I am afraid not so much of them have come to you as we intended.

Some of them have been sold of necessity to buy provisions for our posts. Some have been embezzled by our own drunken and roguish people. Some have been taken by the Indians and many by the English.

The Spaniards, having now taken all the English posts on the Mississippi, have opened that channel free for our commerce, and we are in hopes of getting goods for you from them. I will not boast to you, brother, as the English do, nor promise more than we shall be able to fulfil. I will tell you honestly, what indeed your own good sense will tell you, that a nation at war cannot buy so many goods as when in peace. We do not make so many things to send over the great waters to buy goods, as we made and shall make again in time of peace. When we buy those goods, the English take many of them, as they are coming to us over the great water. What we get in safe, are to be divided among many, because we have a great many soldiers, whom we must clothe. The remainder we send to our brothers the Indians, and in going, a great deal of it is stolen or lost. These are the plain reasons why you cannot get so much from us in war as in peace. But peace is not far off. The English cannot hold out long, because all the world is against them. When that takes place, brother, there will not be an Englishman left on this side the great water. What will those foolish nations then do, who have made us their enemies, sided with the English, and laughed at you for not being as wicked as themselves? They are clothed for a day, and will be naked forever after; while you, who have submitted to short inconvenience, will be well supplied through the rest of your lives. Their friends will be gone and their enemies left behind; but your friends will be here, and will make you strong against all your enemies. For the present you shall have a share of what little goods we can get. We will order some immediately up the Mississippi for you and for us. If they be little, you will submit to suffer a little as your brothers do for a short time. And when we shall have beaten our enemies and forced them to make peace, we will share more plentifully. General Clarke will furnish you with ammunition to serve till we can get some from New Orleans. I must recommend to you particular attention to him. He is our great, good, and trusty warrior; and we have put everything under his care beyond the

Alleghanies. He will advise you in all difficulties, and redress your wrongs. Do what he tells you, and you will be sure to do right. You ask us to send schoolmasters to educate your son and the sons of your people. We desire above all things, brother, to instruct you in whatever we know ourselves. We wish to learn you all our arts and to make you wise and wealthy. As soon as there is peace we shall be able to send you the best of school-masters; but while the war is raging, I am afraid it will not be practicable. It shall be done, however, before your son is of an age to receive instruction.

This, brother, is what I had to say to you. Repeat it from me to all your people, and to our friends, the Kickapous, Piorias, Piankeshaws and Wyattanons. I will give you a commission to show them how much we esteem you. Hold fast the chain of friendship which binds us together, keep it bright as the sun, and let them, you and us, live together in perpetual love.

TJ to Jean Nicolas Dêmeunier

[26 June 1786]

. . . M. de Meusnier, where he mentions that the slave-law has been passed in Virginia, without the clause of emancipation, is pleased to mention that neither Mr. Wythe nor Mr. Jefferson were present to make the proposition they had meditated; from which people, who do not give themselves the trouble to reflect or enquire, might conclude hastily that their absence was the cause why the proposition was not made; and of course that there were not in the assembly persons of virtue and firmness enough to propose the clause for emancipation. This supposition would not be true. There were persons there who wanted neither the virtue to propose, nor talents to enforce the proposition had they seen that the disposition of the legislature was ripe for it. These worthy characters would feel themselves wounded, degraded, and discouraged by this idea. Mr. Jefferson would therefore be obliged to M. de Meusnier to mention it in some such manner as this. "Of the two commissioners who had concerted the amendatory clause for the gradual emancipation of slaves Mr. Wythe could not be present as being a member of the

judiciary department, and Mr. Jefferson was absent on the legation to France. But there wanted not in that assembly men of virtue enough to propose, and talents to vindicate this clause. But they saw that the moment of doing it with success was not yet arrived, and that an unsuccessful effort, as too often happens, would only rivet still closer the chains of bondage, and retard the moment of delivery to this oppressed description of men. What a stupendous, what an incomprehensible machine is man! Who can endure toil, famine, stripes, imprisonment or death itself in vindication of his own liberty, and the next moment be deaf to all those motives whose power supported him thro' his trial, and inflict on his fellow men a bondage, one hour of which is fraught with more misery than ages of that which he rose in rebellion to oppose. But we must await with patience the workings of an overruling providence, and hope that that is preparing the deliverance of these our suffering brethren. When the measure of their tears shall be full, when their groans shall have involved heaven itself in darkness, doubtless a god of justice will awaken to their distress, and by diffusing light and liberality among their oppressors, or at length by his exterminating thunder, manifest his attention to the things of this world, and that they are not left to the guidance of a blind fatality.

*Payment of Wages to
James and Sally Hemings in Paris*

Jan. 1.	Paid assistants on breakg. axle tree on road to Versailles 3 <i>tt</i> .			
	Wages	etrennes		
	<i>tt</i>	<i>tt</i>	<i>tt</i>	
	Paid Petit	72 + 24	=	96
	Espagnol	60 + 12	=	72
	l'Ardennois	60 + 12	=	72
	Boileau	50 + 12	=	62
	Nomeni	50 + 12	=	62
	James	24 + 12	=	36
	Sally	24 + 12	=	36
	Garçon de cuisine	15 + 12	=	27
	Mr. Short's servant	+ 12	=	12
	Mr. Trumbul's servts.	+ 12	=	12
		<u>355</u> + <u>132</u>		<u>487</u>
2.	Pd. Court fees, to servts. of Introdutors & secretary			72 <i>tt</i> .
3.	Petit's accts. from Nov. 25. to Dec. 29.			

TJ to Nicholas Lewis

Dear Sir,

Paris July 29. 1787.

... The torment of mind I endure till the moment shall arrive when I shall not owe a shilling on earth is such really as to render life of little value. I cannot decide to sell my lands. I have sold too much of them already, and they are the only sure provision for my children. Nor would I willingly sell the slaves as long as there remains any prospect of paying my debts with their labour. In this I am governed solely by views to their happiness which will render it worth their while to use extraordinary cautions for some time to enable me to put them ultimately on an easier footing, which I will do the moment they have paid the debts due from the estate, two thirds of which have been contracted by purchasing them. I am therefore strengthened in the idea of renting out my whole estate; not to any one person, but in different parts to different persons, as experience proves that it is only small concerns that are gainful, and it would be my interest that the tenants should make a reasonable gain. The lease I made to Garth and Moseley would be a good model. I do not recollect whether in that there was reserved a right of distraining on the lands for the whole rent. If not, such a clause would be essential, especially in the present relaxed state of the laws. I know there was in that no provision against paper money. This is still more essential. The best way of stating the rent would be in ounces of silver. The rent in that lease, tho expressed in current money, was meant to be 11.£ sterling a titheable. When we consider the rise in the price of tobacco, it should balance any difference for the worse which may have taken place in the lands in Albemarle, so as to entitle us there to equal terms. In Cumberland, Goochland, Bedford, where the lands are better, perhaps better terms might be expected. Calculating this on the number of working slaves, it holds up to us a clear revenue capable of working off the debts in a reasonable time. Think of it, my dear Sir, and if you do not find it disadvantageous be so good as to try to execute it, by leases of 3, 4, or 5 years: not more, because no dependance can be reposed in our laws continuing the same for any length of time. Indeed 3. years might be the most eligible term. The mill should be separated from the lease, finished, and rented by itself. All the lands reserved to my

own use in Garth and Mousley's lease should still be reserved, and the privileges of that lease in general. House negroes still to be hired separately. The old and infirm, who could not be hired, or whom it would be a pity to hire, could perhaps be employed in raising cotton, or some other easy culture on lands to be reserved; George still to be reserved to take care of my orchards, grasses &c. The lands in Albemarle should be relieved by drawing off a good number of the labourers to Bedford, where a better hire might be expected and more lands be opened there. I feel all the weight of the objection that we cannot guard the negroes perfectly against ill usage. But in a question between hiring and selling them (one of which is necessary) the hiring will be temporary only, and will end in their happiness; whereas if we sell them, they will be subject to equal ill usage, without a prospect of change. It is for their good therefore ultimately, and it appears to promise a relief to me within such a term as I would be willing to wait for. I do not mention the rate of hire with a view to tie you up to that, but merely to shew that hiring presents a hopeful prospect. I should rely entirely on your judgment for that, for the choice of kind and hopeful tenants, and for every other circumstance . . .

TJ to William Drayton

Sir

Paris July 30. 1787.

The fig and the mulberry are so well known in America, that nothing need be said of them. Their culture too is by women and children, and therefore earnestly to be desired in countries where there are slaves. In these, the women and children are often employed in labours disproportioned to their sex and age. By presenting to the master objects of culture, easier and equally beneficial, all temptation to misemploy them would be removed, and the lot of this tender part of our species be much softened. By varying too the articles of culture, we multiply the chances for making something, and disarm the seasons in a proportionable degree of their calamitous effects.

The Olive is a tree the least known in America, and yet the most worthy of being known. Of all the gifts of heaven to man, it is next to the most precious, if it be not the most precious. Perhaps it may

claim a preference even to bread; because there is such an infinitude of vegetables which it renders a proper and comfortable nourishment. In passing the Alps at the Col de Tende, where they are mere masses of rock, wherever there happens to be a little soil, there are a number of olive trees, and a village supported by them. Take away these trees, and the same ground in corn would not support a single family. A pound of oil which can be bought for 3d. or 4d. sterling is equivalent to many pounds of flesh by the quantity of vegetables it will prepare and render fit and comfortable food. Without this tree the county of Provence and territory of Genoa would not support one half, perhaps not one third, their present inhabitants. The nature of the soil is of little consequence, if it be dry. The trees are planted from 15. to 20. f. apart, and, when tolerably good, will yeild 15. or 20. lb . of oil yearly, one with another. There are trees which yeild much more. They begin to render good crops at 20. years old, and last till killed by cold, which happens at some time or other even in their best positions in France. But they put out again from their roots. In Italy I am told they have trees 200 years old. They afford an easy but constant employment thro' the year, and require so little nourishment that, if the soil be fit for any other production, it may be cultivated among the olive trees, without injuring them. The Northern limits of this tree are the mountains of the Cevennes from about the meridian of Carcassonne to the Rhone, and from thence the Alps and Appennines as far as Genoa, I know, and how much farther I am not informed. The shelter of these mountains may be considered as equivalent to a degree and a half of latitude at least; because Westward of the commencement of the Cevennes there are no olive trees in $43\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ or even $43.^{\circ}$ of latitude; whereas we find them *now* on the Rhone at Pierrelatte in $44\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ and *formerly* they were at Tains, above the mouth of the Isere in $45.^{\circ}$ sheltered by the near approach of the Cevennes and Alps, which only leave there a passage for the Rhone. Whether such a shelter exists, or not, in the states of South Carolina and Georgia, I know not. But this we may say, either that it exists, or that it is not necessary there: because we know that they produce the orange in open air; and wherever the Orange will stand at all, experience shews that the Olive will stand well; being a hardier tree. Notwithstanding the great quantities of oil made in France, they have not enough for their own consumption, and therefore import from other

countries. This is an article, the consumption of which will always keep pace with it's production. Raise it; and it begets it's own demand. Little is carried to America because Europe has it not to spare. We therefore have not learnt the use of it. But cover the Southern states with it, and every man will become a consumer of oil, within whose reach it can be brought in point of price. If the memory of those persons is held in great respect in South Carolina who introduced there the culture of rice, a plant which sows life and death with almost equal hand, what obligations would be due to him who should introduce the Olive tree, and set the example of it's culture! Were the owner of slaves to view it only as the means of bettering their condition, how much would he better that by planting one of those trees for every slave he possessed! Having been myself an eyewitness to the blessings which this tree sheds on the poor, I never had my wishes so kindled for the introduction of any article of new culture into our own country. South Carolina and Georgia appear to me to be the states wherein it's success, in favorable positions at least, could not be doubted, and I flattered myself it would come within the views of the society for agriculture to begin the experiments which are to prove it's practicability. Carcassonne is the place from which the plants may be most certainly and cheaply obtained. They can be sent from thence by water to Bordeaux, where they may be embarked on vessels bound for Charleston. There is too little intercourse between Charleston and Marseilles to propose this as the port of exportation. I offer my service to the society for the obtaining and forwarding any number of plants which may be desired.

Th: Jefferson

TJ to Francis Eppes

Dear Sir,

Paris July 30. 1787.

Your favor of May 23. 1786. was not received till May 3. 1787. Those of 1786. Oct. 23, 1787. Mar. 30. Apr. 14. and May 2. have duly come to hand. I wrote you on the 14th. of Dec. 1786. and again the 26. of May 1787. The latter was merely to announce a batch of wine sent you by Capt. Gregory from Bordeaux while I was there. It is now so long since I have had occasion to think on subjects of law that I am

not able, with any degree of confidence, to answer your questions on the execution against Mr. Cary's estate. I suppose that the execution directed to the Coroner bound the whole property of Mr. Cary from the moment of it's date. If the slaves taken under the erroneous execution were afterwards sold under the good one, the proceeds of that sale will be secure to us, and any question about the property of the slaves, under pretence they were passed away by the deed of trust, will be a question between the purchaser and trustees and will not affect us. If the good execution could not be satisfied from those particular slaves, yet it could lay hold of all his other slaves and personal property. But were we reduced to seek our remedy against those identical slaves only which were taken under the erroneous execution, I think that they would be subject to the good execution: because the deeds of trust were palpably made to defraud us of a just debt, and are therefore made void by the statute 13. of Elizabeth except against bona fide purchasers for valuable consideration, and having no notice of the fraudulent object of the deed. Even a deed of trust, if not within this description, is not saved out of the condemnation of the statute. With respect to Colo. T. M. Randolph's securityship for this debt, I suppose it to be a very certain fact, tho' I cannot charge myself with the recollection of having seen the bill endorsed by him. 1. I was charged by Mr. Wayles with the having the bill of exchange executed for him at Varina by Mr. Cary, and to be endorsed by Colo. TMR. They did not come to Varina as expected and therefore it was not done then. 2. I am almost certain, I think quite certain, Mr. Wayles told me afterwards he had got the bill so drawn and endorsed. 3. I am also certain that this endorsement has been frequently the subject of conversation between Colo. TMR and myself, that he always spoke of himself as security and often wished we would press for the money. Colo. TMR is too honest a man to question this fact, and would not put you to the trouble of a Bill of Discovery. 4. How it happens that two copies of the bill are without endorsement is unaccountable to me, nor do I know any thing of the third. I delivered every paper of that kind to Frank Harris. Should it be necessary to have recourse against the security, should he declare himself not bound, it may be proper to try whether a copy of the bill and protest cannot be obtained from the notary's office in England.

Mr. Wayles's letters about that date should be examined. Doubtless there is one to whatever friend he inclosed the bill in order to obtain the protest. Probably the answer of his friend re-inclosing the bill and protest will explain it. I should wish that this money, when recovered, should be applied in the first place to pay the debt due to Cary of London because we have always assured him it should be so, and should it not, he will justly accuse us of a gross violation of faith. From the conversation I had with him in London he knows that we will not pay interest from Apr. 19. 1775. to April. 19. 1783. I paid him that interest on a small debt of mine, but took care to explain to him explicitly, that it was on account of the peculiar confidence he had reposed in me, having sent me the articles after the commencement of our national quarrel.

Jones has never sent me a copy of his account current. All I know of it is from memory. I think the balance on the account rendered us after Mr. Wayles's debt was about 9000? sterling. I think after the date of that account there were in his hands about 300 hhds. of tobacco made the year preceding Mr. Wayles's death and the year of his death, that is 1772 and 1773, or perhaps 1773 and 1774. And moreover 120 hhds. or thereabouts shipped by us separately the first year after the division. Stating this tobacco only at the ordinary price and deducting it from the 9000?, and stopping the interest at Apr. 19. 1775. and not recommencing it till Apr. 19. 1783. the debt should not be so very formidable. On the information I received from Mr. Lewis in his letter of Mar. 14. 1786. that the bonds due and the crops to the end of 1785. would pay all my debts except that to my sister Nancy, and those to Jones and McCaul, I made propositions to them for commencing the payment of their debts. The conditions were 1. To pay to Jones two thirds of the profits of my estate and to McCaul one third annually; or if they should prefer it, 400? sterl. to the former and 200? sterl. to the latter annually. [2.] To pay no interest between Apr. 19. 1775. and Apr. 19. 1783. 3. That the crop of 1787. should begin the payment. 4. That their accounts, notwithstanding these payments, should be open to settlement and rectification. McCaul has acceded, and the matter is so far settled with him. To Jones I added two other articles, viz. that the payment into the treasury should not affect him at all, and

that in proportion as I should proceed paying my third of the just balance, I should be discharged from the remaining two thirds. This last article I thought we should all wish to make with him, that, the estate being now divided the debt should also be divided and our families be left clear of all responsibility but for themselves. Jones answered that he could not decide till he should hear from his agent in Virginia. He neither approved nor disapproved the conditions, except that of the release as to the two thirds, saying he apprehended if he released any part of the estate it would release the whole; but he said he would answer me finally when he should hear from his agent. I rather believe he will accept my conditions. But I am quite thrown off the hinges by your information that notwithstanding the state of things from Mr. Lewis in March 1786. that all would be paid, you had found on an estimate in Sep. 1786. there would yet be a balance of 1200? to pay. When I consider the quantity of tobacco to be counted on, the charges to come out of that, it appears evident that the debts can not be paid in this way. I am decided against selling my lands. They are the only sure provision for my children, and I have sold too much of them already. I am also unwilling to sell negroes, if the debts can be paid without. This unwillingness is for their sake, not my own; because my debts once cleared off, I shall try some plan of making their situation happier, determined to content myself with a small portion of their labour. I think it better for them therefore to be submitted to harder conditions for a while in order that they may afterwards be put into a better situation. I hired my estate in Albemarle once for 11.? sterl. for every titheable hand. Tobacco is since risen, and the lands of Goochland, Cumberland, and Bedford are more profitable. I may hope therefore a good rent may be obtained for the whole estate, letting it out in small parcels to different tenants known to be kind and careful in their natures. I propose my former lease to Garth and Mousley as the model, reserving all the advantages and privileges reserved in that, as also the lands reserved in that to my own use; inserting a clause for distraining on the lands for the whole hire, which I believe was not in that, and which, so far as concerned the hire of the slaves, would not result from the general provisions of the law, unless expressly provided for;

guarding also against paper money by stating the rent in ounces of silver, restraining the leases to three years, or at any rate not more than five; retaining rigorously the clauses which had for their object the good treatment of my slaves, particularly that which denied a diminution of rent on the death of a slave; otherwise it would be their interest to kill all the old and infirm by hard usage. Supposing there are about 90 titheable slaves, a reasonable rent on them, my lands and stocks, the tenants paying every tax and charge of every kind, will make a nett annual sum which may clear off the debts within such a term of years as I should be willing to wait for. It will substitute certain calculation for incertainty, and relieve my friends from the perplexity of my affairs added to their own. The only objection is the difficulty of guarding my negroes against ill usage. I put it in all it's force, and I shall go through the operation, as a man does that of being cut for the stone, with a view to relief. I have therefore written to Mr. Lewis to pray him to put my affairs on this footing immediately, in which I know your goodness will aid him. It is taking one great trouble in the lump, to be relieved from it in the detail. It may be lessened too by each undertaking the part to which he is convenient. When this arrangement shall be taken, I shall feel like a person on shore, escaped from shipwreck. But this cannot be in time for the first year's paiment to McCaul, in which I would on no account fail. I hope resources may be found to effect that. I am to thank you for the Magnolia seeds which came by the way of London. I have heard nothing yet of the Cedar berries which should have come to Havre in a ship of Ross McConnico & Ritson. There are some seeds arrived for me at Bordeaux but I have no information what they are, nor from whence. Perhaps they are the cedar berries. Thanks for all the trouble you have taken and take for me are next to nothing. A sensibility of it is deeply engraven in my heart. I write to Mrs. Eppes, to Jack, and to Mr. Skipwith, making them the channel of my good wishes to the families. I have only to add therefore assurances to yourself of the sincere esteem with which I am Dear Sir your affectionate friend & servant,

Th: Jefferson

TJ to Edward Bancroft

Dear Sir

Paris Jan. 26. 1788.

I have deferred answering your letter on the subject of slaves, because you permitted me to do it till a moment of leisure, and that moment rarely comes, and because too, I could not answer you with such a degree of certainty as to merit any notice. I do not recollect the conversation at Vincennes to which you allude, but can repeat still on the same ground, on which I must have done then, that as far as I can judge from the experiments which have been made, to give liberty to, or rather, to abandon persons whose habits have been formed in slavery is like abandoning children. Many quakers in Virginia seated their slaves on their lands as tenants. They were distant from me, and therefore I cannot be particular in the details, because I never had very particular information. I cannot say whether they were to pay a rent in money, or a share of the produce: but I remember that the landlord was obliged to plan their crops for them, to direct all their operations during every season and according to the weather, but, what is more afflicting, he was obliged to watch them daily and almost constantly to make them work, and even to whip them. A man's moral sense must be unusually strong, if slavery does not make him a thief. He who is permitted by law to have no property of his own, can with difficulty conceive that property is founded in any thing but force. These slaves chose to steal from their neighbors rather than work. They became public nuisances, and in most instances were reduced to slavery again. But I will beg of you to make no use of this imperfect information (unless in common conversation). I shall go to America in the Spring and return in the fall. During my stay in Virginia I shall be in the neighborhood where many of these trials were made. I will inform myself very particularly of them, and communicate the information to you. Besides these, there is an instance since I came away of a young man (Mr. Mayo) who died and gave freedom to all his slaves, about 200. This is about 4. years ago. I shall know how they have turned out. Notwithstanding the discouraging result of these experiments, I am decided on my final return to America to try this one. I shall endeavor to import as many Germans as I have grown slaves. I will settle them and my slaves, on farms of 50. acres

(continued...)

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