

**Thomas Jefferson to Thomas Law, January 15, 1811,  
from The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve  
Volumes. Federal Edition. Collected and Edited by Paul  
Leicester Ford.**

**TO THOMAS LAW J. MSS.**

Monticello, January 15, 1811.

Dear Sir, —An absence from home of some length has prevented my sooner acknowledging the receipt of your letter, covering the printed pamphlet, which the same absence has as yet prevented me from taking up, but which I know I shall read with great pleasure. Your favor of December the 22d, is also received.

Mr. Wagner's malignity, like that of the rest of his tribe of brother printers, who deal out calumnies for federal readers, gives me no pain. When a printer cooks up a falsehood, it is as easy to put it into the mouth of a Mr. Fox, as of a smaller man, and safer into that of a dead than a living one. Your sincere attachment to this country, as well as to your native one, was never doubted by me; and in that persuasion, I felt myself free to express to you my genuine sentiments with respect to England. No man was more sensible than myself of the just value of the friendship of that country. There are between us so many of those circumstances which naturally produce and cement kind dispositions, that if they could have forgiven our resistance to their usurpations, our connections might have been durable, and have insured duration to both our governments. I wished, therefore, a cordial friendship with them, and I spared no occasion of manifesting this in our correspondence and intercourse with them; not disguising, however, my desire of friendship with their enemy also. During the administration of Mr. Addington, I thought I discovered some friendly symptoms on the part of that government; at least, we received

## Library of Congress

some marks of respect from the administration, and some of regret at the wrongs we were suffering from their country. So, also, during the short interval of Mr. Fox's power. But every other administration since our Revolution has been equally wanton in their injuries and insults, and have manifested equal hatred and aversion. Instead, too, of cultivating the government itself, whose principles are those of the great mass of the nation,

they have adopted the miserable policy of teasing and embarrassing it, by allying themselves with a faction here, not a tenth of the people, noisy and unprincipled, and which never can come into power while republicanism is the spirit of the nation, and that must continue to be so, until such a condensation of population shall have taken place as will require centuries. Whereas, the good will of the government itself would give them, and immediately, every benefit which reason or justice would permit it to give. With respect to myself, I saw great reason to believe their ministers were weak enough to credit the newspaper trash about a supposed personal enmity in myself towards England. This wretched party imputation was beneath the notice of wise men. England never did me a personal injury, other than in open war; and for numerous individuals there, I have great esteem and friendship. And I must have had a mind far below the duties of my station, to have felt either national partialities or antipathies in conducting the affairs confided to me. My affections were first for my own country, and then, generally, for all mankind; and nothing but minds placing themselves above the passions, in the functionaries of this country, could have preserved us from the war to which their provocations have been constantly urging us. The war interests in England include a numerous and wealthy part of their population; and their influence is deemed worth courting by ministers wishing to keep their places. Continually endangered by a powerful opposition, they find it convenient to humor the popular passions at the expense of the public good. The shipping interest, commercial interest, and their janizaries of the navy, all fattening on war, will not be neglected by ministers of ordinary minds. Their tenure of office is so infirm that they dare not follow the dictates of wisdom, justice, and the well-calculated interests of their country.

## Library of Congress

This vice in the English constitution, renders a dependence on that government very unsafe. The feelings of their King, too, fundamentally adverse to

us, have added another motive for unfriendliness in his ministers. This obstacle to friendship, however, seems likely to be soon removed; and I verily believe the successor will come in with fairer and wiser dispositions towards us; perhaps on that event their conduct may be changed. But what England is to become on the crush of her internal structure, now seeming to be begun, I cannot foresee. Her monied interest, created by her paper system, and now constituting a baseless mass of wealth equal to that of the owners of the soil, must disappear with that system, and the medium for paying great taxes thus failing, her navy must be without support. That it shall be supported by permitting her to claim dominion of the ocean, and to levy tribute on every flag traversing that, as lately attempted and not yet relinquished, every nation must contest, even *ad internecionem*. And yet, that retiring from this enormity, she should continue able to take a fair share in the necessary equilibrium of power on that element, would be the desire of every nation.

I feel happy in withdrawing my mind from these anxieties, and resigning myself, for the remnant of life, to the care and guardianship of others. Good wishes are all an old man has to offer to his country or friends. Mine attend yourself, with sincere assurances of esteem and respect, which, however, I should be better pleased to tender you in person, should your rambles ever lead you into the vicinage of Monticello.