

Thomas Jefferson to French Strother, June 8, 1797, The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes. Federal Edition. Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester Ford.

TO FRENCH STROTHER J. MSS.

Philadelphia, June 8, 1797.

Dear Sir, —In compliance with the desire you expressed in the few short moments I had the pleasure of being with you at Fredericksburg, I shall give you some account of what is passing here. The President's speech you will have seen; and how far its aspect was turned towards war. Our opinion here is that the Executive had that in contemplation, and were not without expectation that the legislature might catch the flame. A powerful part of that has shown a disposition to go all lengths with the Executive; and they have been able to persuade some of more moderate principles to go so far with them as to join them in a very sturdy address. They have voted the compleating & manning the three frigates, & going on with the fortifications. The Senate have gone much further, they have brought in bills for buying more armed vessels, sending them & the frigates out as convoys to our trade, raising more cavalry, more artillerists, and providing a great army, to come into actual service only, if necessary. They have not decided whether they will permit the merchants to arm. The hope & belief is that the Representatives will concur in none of these measures, though their divisions hitherto have been so equal as to leave us under doubt & apprehension. The usual majorities have been from 1. to 6. votes, & these sometimes one way, sometimes the other. Three of the Virginia members dividing from their colleagues occasion the whole difficulty. If they decline these measures, we shall rise about the 17th inst. It appears that the dispositions of the French government towards us wear a very angry cast indeed, and this before Pickering's letter to Pinckney was known to them. We do not know what effect that may produce. We expect Paine every day in

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a vessel from Havre, & Colo Monroe in one from Bordeaux. Tobacco keeps up to a high price & will still rise; flour is dull at 7½ Dollars. I am, with great esteem, dear Sir, your friend and servant.