

La-fourche January 6th 1823 —

Having some idea of riding to the river tomorrow; and feeling even more than usually inclined to enter into conversation with you, to pass away this stormy and howling evening, more pleasantly than my books could assist me in doing; I believe I will gratify my inclination, and take a letter for you, to the office; hoping always, that it will "bring good luck upon me", in the form of one from you; although the intervals you have of late suffered to take place between your letters, does not afford a very solid foundation for expecting one.

The assurance you give me in your last that a certain conviction shall not have any effect on your conduct towards my grandmother, is quite unnecessary to one who knows you so well, and, knowing, loves you so fondly as I do, dearest Virginia. — With the same total absence of all reserve which shall always characterize, (if unreserved confidence can be a characteristic among husbands) my conduct toward you; I confess that I think your conviction, to a certain extent, well grounded; and that jealousy is, not a small, but a great ingredient in the feeling she has lately manifested for you; but believe me, dearest Virginia, it is not a "decided dislike", but only the workings of the petulance which old people generally show at contradiction, and which I believe had very near if not quite spent itself.

Even if she were a total stranger to your mother, her affection for me, is too great to suffer her to feel any thing but love, for one in whom she knows that all my affections and all my hopes of happiness are centered.

She appears to be in much better spirits than she has been for some time past; which I attribute to the ^{that has taken place} great improvement in her health, of

late. She has postponed her journey to my return: but as that is so very uncertain, and her desire to be in Albemarle, so great; I recommend it to her, not to defer it beyond the first fine spring weather. Would to God, my beloved, I could then be her escort! if I could only once more clasp you in these arms, it ~~would~~ ^{again} not, I think, be in the power of fate to ~~tear~~ me from you!

If I could only once be quietly settled by your side, after having so arranged my concerns in this quarter, that they would not distract me; then, I should be happy; and the effects would not be less apparent on my studies. Your grandfather's assistance, would make an otherwise rugged and toilsome road, smooth and easy.— no one can be more in want of such assistance as he can so well give, the methodizing the mind, than myself. Mine, is not one of those happily constituted minds, which from its own native vigor, can direct its energies, along any road, however dull and long and tedious, to every project that is pointed out as necessary to be gained!— This is not, however, from want of application: for the studies which I like, and would pursue with delight, were I as rich as the Earl of Hereford himself, are those which require most application. I have often become so interested, as to be kept awake, in my bed, by mathematics, and general speculations on various subjects and yet, when I come to history, the study of which is earnestly recommended by every distinguished man who ever gave an opinion on the subject, as essentially necessary, to all who wish to rise above the "ignorant vulgar," or, fit themselves for any liberal profession, I actually fall asleep; or if my eyes remain open, my mind does not; and all the ardor with which Bolingbroke himself can inspire me, does not suffice to keep it so.— You perceive I have no more room for felicitation, than yourself: ~~but~~ I do not despair however! and yet hope, though it is rather late, to be placed in the right path, and to move in it, when

once there, with tolerable ease and speed.

You say nothing of either of you going to Richmond this winter! Mary, I see clearly, has been choused and cheated in the whole of the business; and if she will only promise me a liberal fee, I will undertake to procure her indemnification against you all; even should you employ T.W.G. who we hear has become a great orator. (at which however, Browne turns up his nose). - By the by, while I think of it, let me make "amende honorable" to G.W.G. (a very material difference, I take it), for saddling "Cleomenes" upon him; which he would not certainly take as a compliment, were it to reach his ears. My excuse however, is very good: I had not read it! The last paragraph had caught my eye, and I thought I recognised the same hand that drew the tirade against "the sex", which you may recollect, my grandmother, according to her laudable custom, displayed to us one day, after receiving it. But I was convinced the next morning, as our boat shot through the water, of my mistake, and of "the danger of hasty and inconsiderate judgments."

You are again lapsing into short letters! There are a thousand little details ~~concerning~~ yourself and our sisters which you know ~~care not~~ but be interesting to me. I now know nothing of the health of either Eleanor or Cornelius who were both unwell when you last mentioned them. Believe me, ~~I~~ cannot enjoy a greater pleasure than to hear every thing that passes in your breast, or in your house. Browne sends his love to you, and ~~Mao~~ther and the girls; embrace them for me, and believe me "true as heaven," my beloved Virginia,

Your devoted

Nich^r. Philip Trist.)

Repeat my caution to Harriet, and tell her I believe she is more in want than any of you, of the wholesome authority of a "Baron" — To Francis of his

wife, of whom I can say with Browne, that they stand very high in my scale of human excellence", present me with as much affection as you could wish your husband to feel for them. — oh what a detestable climate! last night, without a spark of fire, I went to bed with my hair wet with perspiration. now, by a large ash fire, I cannot keep myself warm.