Jefferson to David Hartley

Paris, July 2, 1787.

Dear Sir,—I received lately your favor of April the 23d, on my return from a journey of three or four months; and am always happy in an occasion of recalling myself to your memory. The most interesting intelligence from America, is that respecting the late insurrection in Massachusetts. The cause of this has not been developed to me, to my perfect satisfaction. The most probable is, that those individuals were of the imprudent number of those, who have involved themselves in debt beyond their abilities to pay, and that a vigorous effort in that government to compel the payment of private debts, and raise money for public ones, produced the resistance. I believe you may be assured, that an idea or desire of returning to anything like their ancient government, never entered into their heads. I am not discouraged by this. For thus I calculate. An insurrection in one of thirteen States, in the course of eleven years that they have subsisted, amounts to one in any particular State, in one hundred and forty-three years, say a century and a half. This would not be near as many, as have happened in every other government that has ever existed. So that we shall have the difference between a light and a heavy government, as clear gain. I have no fear, but that the result of our experiment will be, that men may be trusted to govern themselves without a master. Could the contrary of this be proved, I should conclude,either that there is no God, or that he is a malevolent being. You have heard of the federal convention, now sitting at Philadelphia, for the amendment of the Confederation. Eleven States appointed delegates certainly; it was expected that Connecticut would also appoint, the moment its Assembly met. Rhode Island had refused. I expect they will propose several amendments; that that relative to our commerce will probably be adopted immediately, but that the others must wait to be adopted, one after another, in proportion as the minds of the States ripen for them. Dr. Franklin enjoys good health. I shall always be happy to hear from you, being with sentiments of very sincere esteem and respect, dear Sir, your most obedient, and most humble servant.