Benjamin Rush to Richard Price

BENJAMIN RUSH TO RICHARD PRICE.

Philada, May 25th, 1786.

Dear Sir, — My last letter to you by Capt. Kennady contained an account of an intended Convention of the States to assemble at Annap-
olis in Maryland next September, for the purpose of agreeing upon certain commercial regulations, and of suggesting such alterations in the Confederation as will give more extensive and coercive powers to Congress. We entertain the most flattering hopes from this Convention, especially as an opinion seems to have pervaded all classes of people, that an increase of power in Congress is absolutely necessary for our safety and independence. Most of the *distresses* of our country, and of the mistakes which Europeans have formed of us, have arisen from a belief that the American revolution is over. This is so far from being the case, that we have only finished the first act of the great drama. We have changed our forms of government, but it remains yet to effect a revolution in our principles, opinions and manners, so as to accommodate them to the forms of government we have adopted. This is the most difficult part of the business of the patriots and legislators of our country. It requires more wisdom and fortitude than to expel or to reduce armies into captivity. I wish to see this idea inculcated by your pen. Call upon the rulers of our country to lay the foundations of their empire in knowledge as well as virtue. Let our common people be compelled by law to give their children (what is commonly called) a good English education. Let schoolmasters of every description be supported in part by the public, and let their principles and morals be subjected to examination before we employ them. Let us have Colleges in each of the States, and one federal university under the patron age of Congress, where the youth of all the States may be melted (as it were) together into one mass of citizens, after they have acquired the first principles of knowledge in the Colleges of their respective States. Let the law of nature and nations, the common law of our country, the different systems of government, history, and every thing else connected with the advancement of republican knowledge and principles, be taught by able professors in this University. This plan of general education alone will render the American revolution a blessing to man-
kind. As you have staked your reputation upon this great event, with the world and with posterity, you must not desert us till you see the curtain drop and the last act of the drama closed. A small pamphflet addressed by you to the Congress, and the legislature of each of the States, upon this subject, I am sure would have more weight with our rulers than an hundred publications thrown out by the citizens of this country. It will only be necessary in this pamphflet to be wholly silent upon those subjects in Christianity which now so much divide and agitate the Christian world. The wisest plan of education that could be offered would be unpopular among 99 out of an 100 of the citizens of America, if it opposed in any degree the doctrine of the Trinity. Some of the members of the reformed Episcopal Church in the middle

and southern States complained of the note you publishedwith my letter in the English newspapers. It has injured them in the opinion of some of the English clergy. You will perceive from their prayer book, that their Articles, tho' reduced in number, are equally Calvanistical with the Articles of the old English Church.

It is with singular pleasure that I inform you that public and private credit are reviving every where, and that laws are gradually coming into force to compel the payment of old English debts. Whoever con siders the effects of war upon morals in all countries, and then adds to these the effects of a sudden, total, and universal dissolution of all government, such as took place in America during the late war, will not be surprised at any of the events that have happened or at the laws that have been passed since the peace. It requires less charity than good sense to make proper allowances for all the vices of our country.

The letters written by Dr Nisbet to his friends soon after his arrival in America, from which so many extracts have been published in the Scotch papers, were written under a deranged state of mind, occasioned by a fever which fixed itself upon his brain. The Doctor has since perfectly recovered his health and reason, has been reinstated in the College, and is now perfectly satisfied with our country.

Our venerable friend Dr. Franklin continues to enjoy as much health and spirits as are compatible with his time of his life. I dined with him a few days ago in a most agreeable circle where he appeared as chearful and gay as a young man of five and twenty. But his conversation was full of the wisdom and experience of mellow old age. He has destroyed party rage in our State, or to borrow an allusion from one of his discoveries, his presence and advice, like oil upon troubled waters, have composed the contending waves of faction which for so many years agitated the State of Pennsylvania.

I beg my most respectful comp. to Mr. Adams, with whom I am happy to find you live upon the most intimate terms.

Should you conclude that the publication of any part of the intelligence contained in this letter, will serve our country, you are at liberty to make that use of it, but I must request that you will not give my name to the public with it.

With the greatest respect, I am, my dear Sir,

Your sincere friend, and most humble servant,

Benjn Rush.

P. S. Most of the complaints against our country which are published in your papers come from British agents, or from a sett of men who have setled among us since the peace, who want either virtue or abilities to maintain themselves, and who would have been poor and unhappy in any country.