

23. "Private Friendship and Political Harmony"

To Thomas Jefferson

Montpellier, February 24, 1826

. . . . The awkward state of the Law Professorship is truly distressing, but seems to be without immediate remedy. Considering the hopeless condition of Mr. Gilmour, a temporary appointment, if an acceptable successor were at hand, whilst not indelicate towards the worthy moribund incumbent, might be regarded as equivalent to a permanent one. And if the hesitation of our Colleagues at Richmond has no reference to Mr. Terril, but is merely tenderness towards Mr. Gilmour, I see no objection to a communication to Mr. T. that would bring him to Virginia at once, and thus abridge the loss of time. The hardheartedness of the Legislature towards what ought to be the favorite offspring of the State, is as reproachful as deplorable. Let us hope that the reflections of another year, will produce a more parental sensibility. . . .

You do not overrate the interest I feel in the University, as the Temple thro which alone lies the road to that of Liberty. But you entirely do my aptitude to be your successor in watching over its prosperity. It would be the pretension of a mere worshipper "remplacer" the Tutelary Genius of the Sanctuary. The best hope is, in the continuance of your cares, till they can be replaced by the stability and selfgrowth of the Institution. Little reliance can be put even on the fellowship of my services. The past year has given me sufficient intimation of the infirmities in wait for me. In calculating the probabilities of survivorship, the inferiority of my constitution forms an equation at least with the seniority of yours. . . .

You cannot look back to the long period of our private friendship & political harmony, with more affecting recollections than I do. If they are a source of pleasure to you, what ought they not to be to me? We cannot be deprived of the happy consciousness of the pure devotion to the public good with which we discharged the trusts committed to us. And I indulge a confidence that sufficient evidence will find its way to another generation, to ensure, after we are gone, whatever of justice may be withheld whilst we are here. The political horizon is already yielding in your case

at least, the surest auguries of it. Wishing & hoping that you may yet live to increase the debt which our Country owes you, and to witness the increasing gratitude, which alone can pay it, I offer you the fullest return of affectionate assurances.