

On British Policy Toward America⁹

December 1782

9 MONDAY

Visited C. Sarsfield who lent me his Notes upon America. Visited Mr. Jay, Mr. Oswald came in. We slid, from one Thing to another into a very lively Conversation upon Politicks.—He asked me what the Conduct of his Court and Nation ought to be, in Relation to America. I answered the Alpha and Omega of British Policy, towards America, was summed up in this one Maxim—See that American Independence is independent, independant of all the World, independent of yourselves as well as of France, and independent of both as well as of the rest of Europe. Depend upon it, you have no Chance for Salvation but by setting up America very high. Take care to remove from the American Mind all Cause of Fear of you. No other Motive but Fear of you, will ever produce in the Americans any unreasonable Attachment to the house of Bourbon.—Is it possible, says he that the People of America should be afraid of Us, or hate Us?—One would think Mr. Oswald says I, that you had been out of the World for these 20 Years past. Yes there are 3 millions of People in America who hate and dread you more than any Thing in the World.—What says he now We are come to our Senses?—Your Change of System, is not yet known in America, says I.—Well says he what shall We do to remove these Fears, and Jealousies?

In one Word says I, favour and promote the Interest, Reputation and Dignity of the United States in every Thing that is consistent with your own. If you pursue the Plan of cramping, clipping and weakening America, on the Supposition that She will be a Rival to you, you will make her really so, you will make her the natural and perpetual Ally of your natural and perpetual Ennemies.—But in what Instance says he have We discovered such a disposition?—In the 3 Leagues from your Shores and the 15 Leagues from Cape Breton, says I to which your Ministry insisted so earnestly to exclude our Fishermen. Here was a Point that would have done Us great harm and you no good, on the contrary harm. So that you would have hurt yourselves to hurt Us. This disposition must be guarded

against.—I am fully of your Mind about that, says he. But what else can We do?—Send a Minister to Congress, says I, at the Peace, a clever Fellow, who Understands himself, and will neither set Us bad Examples, nor intermeddle in our Parties. This will shew that you are consistent with yourselves, that you are sincere in your Acknowledgment of American Independence, and that you dont entertain hopes and designs of overturning it. Such a Minister will dissipate many fears, and will be of more Service to the least obnoxious Refugees than any other Measure could be. Let the King send a Minister to Congress and receive one from that Body. This will be acting consistently and with Dignity, in the Face of the Universe. . . .