38. *The Age of Revolutions and Constitutions*

To James Lloyd

*Quincy, 29 March 1815*

... Did Mr. Pitt and Mr. Miranda believe me to be a lover of revolutions, deeply smitten with their charms, ready and eager to seize upon any and every opportunity to involve myself and my country in any revolutionary enterprise? I had been plunged head and ears in the American revolution from 1761 to 1798 (for it had been all revolution during the whole period). Did Mr. Pitt and Mr. Miranda think that I had trod upon feathers, and slept upon beds of roses, during those thirty-seven years? I had been an eye-witness of two revolutions in Holland; one from aristocracy to a mongrel mixture of half aristocracy and half democracy, the other back again to aristocracy and the splendid restoration of the Stadtholder. Did Mr. Pitt and Mr. Miranda think that I was so delighted with these electric shocks, these eruptions of volcanoes, these *tremblements de terre*, as to be ambitious of the character of a chemist, who could produce artificial ones in South America? I had been an ear-witness of some of the first whispers of a revolution in France in 1783, 1784, and 1785, and had given all possible attention to its rise and progress, and I can truly say, that it had given me as much anxiety as our American revolution had ever done. Could Mr. Pitt and Mr. Miranda believe me so fascinated, charmed, enchanted, with what had happened in France, as to be desirous of engaging myself and my country in most hazardous and expensive and bloody experiments to excite similar horrors in South America?

The last twenty-five years of the last century, and the first fifteen years of this, may be called the age of revolutions and constitutions. We began the dance, and have produced eighteen or twenty models of constitutions, the excellences and defects of which you probably know better than I do. They are, no doubt, the best for us that we could contrive and agree to adopt.