31. "An Enemy to Monarchy"

To George Washington

Paris May 2, 1788

... I am anxious about every thing which may affect our credit. My wish
would be to possess it in the highest degree, but to use it little. Were
we without credit we might be crushed by a nation of much inferior
resources but possessing higher credit. The present system of war renders
it necessary to make exertions far beyond the annual resources of the
state, and to consume in one year the efforts of many. And this system
we cannot change. It remains then that we cultivate our credit with the
utmost attention.—I had intended to have written a word to your Excel-
cellency on the subject of the new constitution, but I have already spun
out my letter to an immoderate length. I will just observe therefore that
according to my ideas there is a great deal of good in it. There are two
things however which I dislike strongly. 1. The want of a declaration of
rights. I am in hopes the opposition of Virginia will remedy this, and
produce such a declaration. 2. The perpetual re-eligibility of the Presi-
dent. This I fear will make that an office for life first, and then hereditary.
I was much an enemy to monarchy before I came to Europe. I am ten
thousand times more so since I have seen what they are. There is scarcely
an evil known in these countries which may not be traced to their king
as it's source, nor a good which is not derived from the small fibres of
republicanism existing among them. I can further say with safety there
is not a crowned head in Europe whose talents or merit would entitle
him to be elected a vestryman by the people of any parish in America.
However I shall hope that before there is danger of this change taking
place in the office of President, the good sense and free spirit of our
countrymen will make the changes necessary to prevent it. Under this
hope I look forward to the general adoption of the new constitution with
anxiety, as necessary for us under our present circumstances. ...