

St. Clairsville August 22nd 1806
1806

Dear Sir,

I shrink from the task of addressing you, when I think of my own littleness, and your native greatness; independent of your exalted station. and when I think that every moment of your life, is emphatically precious, I feel guilty for thus intruding on your leisure. But from a firm conviction, that the orthodoxy of a suffering Patriot, will find access to you: I ask the liberty in my plain way, of making known my simple narrative. I am at present Lieutenant Col^l, Commandant of Belmont County Ohio, from my earliest youth my firm attachment, to our happy system of representative Government, alike attracted the notice of the friends, and enemies of equal rights, and rational Liberty; the latter made me the butt of all their malice, and hatred, while the former, esteemed me far above my merit. by a steady attention to business, in trading, on the western waters; I acquired a handsome property, but launching still farther, I experienced a severe loss in the New Orleans trade, and was left in debt, about two thousand dollars, for goods in Baltimore, and the property which I had left in land, Col^ls &c was worth, about Ten thousand. My political enemies, a little nest of Aristocrats in this county, old St. Clair's Creatures, seizing with avidity, upon the opportunity, of destroying my influence, and cramping my exertions, in the common cause, wrote to my creditors, and had my notes, instantly sent out to an Attorney, the ring-leader of the Junta, at the same time industriously circulating a report, that all my property was under execution, for it ^{was} determined, I should not have the privilege, of selling my property to raise the money; They publicly declared they would root out, the damned Democrats. I had a good Nail Manufactory, three Journeymen and two Apprentices, a good stock of Iron, a Brick yard was making money reasonably well at both, and the remains of a Store, and my credit untwist, till They set to work by every stratagem that malice, and cunning, could invent, and with effect, turned away all my work hands, and obstructing my advertisements, for the sale of my property, so so much of it, as would raise the money, the day previous was fixed upon, to send off my Hands, the day of sale every man they could parade, came furnished, and by the same artful, & secret insinuations, prevented the sale of every thing, even to the value of a cent, the third and finishing stroke, was aimed for the day following, the Sheriff one of the Party, with an air of malignant triumph, served the writ on me, which was kept in profound secrecy, for three weeks before, I offered the Attorney at ^{three} successive times Five, six, & eight thousand ^{dollars}, in property for my notes, but as this was no part of their plan, it was utterly refused, and as very possible for my friends, who were ready to do any thing for me, but in a Country where every dollar, is realized in landed property, money is out of the question. After a fruitless defence at law, still hoping to make sale, the Sheriff with an execution seized, and sold every thing, I was possessed of, real and personal, thereby a concerted systematick persecution, a man and his family, was torn from affluence, and plenty, to indigence and want, and while a well furnished House, the abode of hospitality is ransacked, and made a kind of publick plunder, while the unoffending owner without a crime, is reduced to the distress of even laying a sick child, on a borrowed blanket, on a floor, not his own, such are Federal arguments, to convince a Democrat he is wrong.

Maffers William. 5th Clair, vll, Aug. 22. 06. rec. 5th Sep. 8.

As I am tolerably well acquainted with the Latin & French Languages and some branches of the Mathematics the top of my Books and Instruments is to me a serious loss without the means of procuring others my friends advised me to apply to General Mansfield for a Deputy surveyors place for this purpose I procured letters of recommendation from the Governor, Judge Meigs, W^m. Morrow, General Buell, General Dupper and the principal Republicans of the state, and went three hundred miles on foot to the surveyor General from whom I met with a very friendly reception and polite treatment But there was no vacancy But he gave me this word I should have the first place that occurred but when that may happen is altogether uncertain I thus stood up on all sides I could not tell where to look for relief tho' still trying to trust in Divine Providence without consulting any living creature The Idea of this singular communication is the result of many sleepless nights and for many reasons first because I do not wish to let my poverty be known to my Brethren Officers and because the Personage I address is too great to treat me with scorn or to mock my distress and from who's known goodness and unbounded Philanthropy I need not fear to be turned into ridicule and contempt and that my children and grand children may say with pleasing remembrance that the Man who saved my Country when reeling fast to ruin also saved me from the merciless fangs of Aristocratic vengeance and because in my extremely straitened circumstances it will never wound my feelings to be under obligations to your Excellency my object is simply the Use of two Hundred Dollars for two years to purchase a Ton of rail Iron which with my own labour (for I have a good cutting Machine) will rescue me from Idleness one of the heaviest curses in this life and restore me to industry to contentment and usefulness to my Family and Society for a moment let Your Excellency ^{figure} to yourself a man borne down by a flood of Devocation with nine in Family without the common necessaries of life and without resources except a few little jobs of surveying but I forbear the only amusement left me (for I have no book) is the weakly Review tho' I am not now able to pay for it — I am well aware of your impostors but for the Honesty and uprightness of this spirit and that what it contains is literally and substantially true I appeal to Heaven to witness But as your Excellency can have no personal knowledge of me I herewith transmit a letter I yesterday received from Governor Diffin to corroborate the above and which humbly request may be returned with any communication you may condescend to favour me with

Accept Dear Sir my warmest wishes for your present and future welfare and happiness and believe me with the sincerest regard and highest esteem your Excellency's most obedient and very humble servant

His Excellency Thomas Jefferson

Wm^m Wathers