

**Jonathan Boucher to George Washington, May 21, 1770,  
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**FROM THE REVEREND JONATHAN BOUCHER.**

ST. MARY'S May the 21st. 1770.

SIR

So hurried as You know Me to be at present, I flatter myself You will not even now expect more of Me than the Outlines of a Plan of Travelling: the filling it up may be the Work of further Leisure, & mature Consideration. And, as I have Nothing to lay before You, but mere Conjectures & Opinions, unsupported by any experience of my Own, let Me again have Leave to remind You not to pay any greater Deference to These, or to any Opinions, than They are found fairly to deserve. It is a Project of sufft. Importance to warrant yr. collectg. ye. Opinions of All who may be suppos'd to have ever attended to, or thot. of the Matter.

Travelling, You are well aware, is still and long has been much in Vogue in our Mother Country; yet has it so frequently been attempted & executed in so absurd & preposterous a Manner, that it is now become a Question, whether, rationally considered, it be really useful or not. And as warm an Advocate as I profess myself for this Method of completg. an Educatn., I yet readily own that it is only some Persons to whom Travelling can possibly be useful & that there are perhaps equally many to whom it cod. certainly be pernicious. The light, giddy, fantastical frothy & frivolous Characters amongst Us, Wd. only be made worse, & rendered incurable: but, let Sedentary Men talk as much as They please of ye.

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Loss of Time, ye. Expence, & ye. unsettled & roving Habits acquired by Travel, to Me it is beyond a Dispute, that to an observant Mind, & to a Person Endued wth. Judgmt. to draw profitable Knowledge fm. ye. various Objects wc. various Countries are perpetually presentg., there is not anor. so eligible a System to be taken to form & polish ye. manners of a liberal Youth, & to fit Him for ye. Business & Conversan. of ye. World. And if You will be pleased to apply this Remark to some living Instances to be met with Even here, I am mistaken if it will not account for that Objecn. so often started by the Opposers of this Plan—that such, & such an one have travelled without being any better for it. Depend upon it, They were either originally unfit for the Experiment, or it has been conducted on wrong Principles. Let This be sd. wtht. any Suspicion of my aimg. to reflect on any Individuals: the Reflexion is not confin'd to Virginia. But there is a certn. Captiousness in some of yr. Countrymen wc. I sincerely cannot but lament, tho I very freely pardon as being but ye. ebullitions of Zeal for thr. Country, wc. will hardly allow a Foreigner (& such I must be called in Spite of my sincere Attachmt. to Virga. & Virginians) to censure find Fault wth. any Thing belonging either to Them or to their Country. But, as I am well convinced This is not ye. Case wth. you, I return to my subject.

It being then agreed, at least by You & Me, that, generally speaking, Travelling is useful & necessary, to young Persons in all Countries, let Us, as more immediately interesting Us, now more particularly enquire, if it be not particularly so to a Virginian & to Mr. Custis. The peculiar Advantages we result to Youth from Travel, are sd. to be first, an Easy Address, ye. wearing off national Prejudices, & ye. findg. nothg. ridiculous in national Peculiarities; & above all, that supreme Accomplishmt. wc. we call a *Knowledge of ye. World*. A Service so useful as to supersede or disgrace all ye. Rest: for I understand not ye. Phrase in ye. sense in wc. Fops or Rakes use it, but mean by it that easy that elegant that useful Knowledge wc. results fm. an enlarged observan. of Men & Things, fm. an Acquaintance with ye. Customs & Usages of various and distant Countries, fm. some Insight into their Politics, Governmt., Religion and Manners, in a Word, fm. ye. Study & Contemplan. of Men, as They present Themselves on ye. grt. stage of ye. World, in

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various Forms, & under Diff't Appearances. This is that Master Science, w<sup>c</sup>. every G-man shd. know, & w<sup>c</sup>. yet no school nor College can teach Him. To apply this to ye. Country We live in where will You point out to Me another so circumscrib'd in its Intercourse wth. Mankind at large, as Virga.? Saving here & there a needy Emigrant from Gt. Britain, an illiterate Captn. of a Ship, or a Mercht. subaltern Mercht. to a Mercht, to whom can a Virga. Youth apply, for a Speciman of ye. Manners &c of any other People? Thus limited in ye. Oppty. for Observan., must not his Ideas necessarily resemble Those of a Carribee Indian, mentioned by Lafitan, who, offended at being called a Savage, exclaimed, *I know no Savages but the Europeans, who adopt none of our Customs*; or Those of ye. Inhabitants of the Marean Islands, who, being persuaded that Theirs was ye. only Language in ye. Universe, concluded from thence that all other Men knew not how to speak? He finds his Lot cast in a Country amazingly fertile, & thence learns to conclude that even ye. rich Plains watered by ye. Nile, the Grecian Temple, the Roman Campania, the Spanish Andulusia, are all mean & contemptible w<sup>n</sup>. compar'd wth. *his low Grounds*; & pursuing this train of Reasoning, soon supposes also like the Baron of Thonder ton Tronck; that both his Country & Countrymen, are the finest of all possible Countries, & People. Now, if it were only for ye. Sake of Truth & Decency, if it were only to avoid ye. Ridicule to w<sup>c</sup>. these palpable Absurdities expose Them, one cannot but wish our Youth cd. be taught to open thr. Eyes, & extend Them beyond thr. own foggy Air & dirty Acres. But, This is not all: there is not a Country in ye. World, where a Man of Capacity cd. be more eminently useful by promotg. & encouraging ye. Arts, than in Virga. Till very lately You cd. hardly any where see a piece of Land tolerably plough'd, or a person who cd. be persuaded that plowing made any difference: & even yet it is more than probable, even Those who have made ye. greatest Improvmts. in this most natural, most useful, & most amusing Art, fall infinitely short of some other Countries. In a political View then, Travelling appears to be exceedingly necessary: since a Man may thus learn to double ye. value of his Estate.

I mentioned too ye. Improvemt. of Manners; by w<sup>c</sup>. I mean an Ability for ingenious, manly, & useful Conversn. For a Traveller who makes a proper Use of his Opportunities, will be

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all of a piece, & return as polished in his Mind & Understanding, as in his Person. To this it is frequently objected yt. wt. is gain'd in Civility & Politeness, is lost in real Goodness & Virtue, by ye. various temptg. Scenes of Vice to wc. a Youth must be exposed in ye. course of his Travels. In Ansr. to This, let Me observe that there are some Tempers who cd. not possibly be preserved fm. ye. Taint of Vice, even wth. ye. Benefit of a private Educan. Or, grant it were practicable to retain ye. Purity of their Morals by such narrow Regulans., do not You think that if, by this Means, They shd. chance to have fewer Vices, They wd. also have fewer Excellencies? And it shd. be remembered that solitary Virtue, however pure & immaculate, is but imperfect Virtue: We are formed for Society, & ye. Business of ye. World is a Duty we owe to Society: & it is therefore our Duty to qualify ourselves for ye. performance of these Duties in ye. best Manr. wc. is by prudent & well conducted Travel.

Let Us now, if You please, as a Contrast to This, for a Moment figure to Ourselves ye. future History of our Pupil, shd. this Expedient not be approv'd of. The chief failings of his Character are that He is constitutionally somewhat too warm, indolent, & voluptuous. As yet these propensities are but in Embrio: Ere long, however, They will discover Themselves, & if not duly & carefully regulated, it is Easy to see to what They will lead. At best, He will soon lose all Relish for mental Excellence—He will unwillingly apply to any Improvemts. either in Arts or Sciences—. Sunk in unmanly Sloth, his Estate will [be] left to ye. Managemt. of some worthless Overseer; & Himself soon be entangled in some matrimonial Adventure, in wc. as Passion will have much to say, it is not very likely Reason will be much listened to. I appeal to You, Sir, if this Acct. be exaggerated, & if it be not sadly verified by many living Instances yt. have fallen under yr. own Observan..

The Contrast is so striking, to Me, at least, it seems so, that I cannot think it possible for any one to hesitate a Moment in deterring. Let Me then hasten just to repeat wt. I yesterday mentioned to You of ye. Manner in we. I cou'd wish my Scheme to be executed.—In the first Place then, I wou'd have Him make the Tour of N: America, at least, ye. Northern Colonies, wc. might very well be done in six months. And This chiefly to avoid ye.

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Absurdity of going so far to get acquainted wth. other Countries, ere He knew any Thing of his own. After This, He shd. go to Engl., & there immediately to be enter'd in One of ye. Universities, not so much fm. any Prospect of Advantages to be gain'd by Study in ye. little Time He wd. stay there, as that it wou'd be by much the safest Place for Him. After a Winter or so spent there, He shou'd be conducted thro' ye. principal Countries & Towns of the three Kingdoms, which wou'd possibly take up nearly a Year; After This He might conveniently spend six Months in the Metropolis, & from thence set out on his Tour thro' some of ye. principal Countries on ye. Continent, wc. He shd. travel thro' not as a Virtuoso to collect Rarities, or as a Connoisseur, to gaze at excellent Pictures or magnificent Buildings, but rather like a Really sensible & *Sentimental Traveller*, such as Horace intimates Ulysses was, who travell'd thro' many Cities to see ye. Manners of many Men.—These are the Outlines of my Plan; which however I no otherwise recommend to You, than as my first Thoughts, wc. I shall be proud to see improv'd by Yr. self or others. The Expence of the Undertaking yet remains to be spoken of, in estimating of which, I am even more at a Loss than in what I have heretofore mentioned. However, as I had much rather have my Judgemt. called in Questn. than my Inclinan. to comply wth. every Request of Yours, I hesitate not to give You my Opinion, such as it is. I cannot then believe that it can possibly be undertaken excuted in any such Manner as You wd. wish, or as it ought, for less than sterg £1000 per ann: if so little: which I calculate in this Manner. It cannot be thot. unreasonable that my Appointmt. if finally I shd. be pitch'd upon to accompany Him, shd. at least be equal to wt. I relinquish here; as I take not into Acct. ye. Injury I may thus eventually do to my Prospects in Life, since This, I think, ought to be charg'd to ye. Pleasure I propose to Myself fm. ye. Scheme. This then I set down at £250: My Expences & those of a servt. & a pr. of Horses, at as much more: His own, & servt. &c. at £250—the remaining £250 I allot to Cloathg. Him & sundry other unforeseen Expences, such as Purchasg. Curiosities, visitg. public Places, &c &c. For Aught I know, This may be too much—tho' I hardly think it is: shou'd it be so, as I know his Circumstances, it shd. be my Study to proportion his Expences, as far as They possibly could, to his Income. And, whoever be his Preceptor, shd. have it strictly in Charge Punctually to render You a

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faithful Acct. of every Disbursemt., that so You might have it in yr. Power to subject Him to whatever new Regulans. You might judge expedient.

I am much ashamed to lay before You so confused & ill digested a Letter, wc. I beg You to impute to my Hurry, & my being constantly interrupted by Company: If, however, You can only collect from it ye. Substance of my Plan, & if that only appears tolerably plausible to You, I am not very anxious for ye. Rest, relying so entirely as I do, on yr. Candor to excuse any Inaccuracies You may meet wth. in wt. I have wrote. This only I have to request of You, that wn. You consult any of yr. Friends on this Matter, You will be so good as not to produce this Letter, which tho' I am not afraid to trust to You, I am yet unwilling shd. be perused by Strangers.

As to Mr. Custis's living wth. Me in Annapolis, shou'd I resolve to remove thither, as I suppose I shall, I have not anything to add to what I yesterday told You. I purpose calling on Mrs. Washington in my Way to Maryland, & shall then request Her immediately to write to You her Sentiments, so that I shall hope to be obliged wth. your final Resolution before I leave Annaps., which will hardly be before the Middle of next Month.

I am, with much Esteem, very truly Sir, Yr. most Obedt. & most Hble Servt. JONAN.  
BOUCHER