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James Breckinridge to John Breckinridge Richmond, Va., 14 December 1787 (excerpt)

Dear Johnny,

. . . I attended one of their [i.e., the House of Delegates] societies last evening to hear their debate on the new constitution: G Nicholas gave us a harangue which lasted an hour but not so much to the amusement of the company as was expected from the abilities of the Gentleman & time he took to prepare himself; After the subject was pretty fully discussed the sense of the house was taken & a great majority were in favour of the ratification of the proposed constitution. Then came on another Question, whether it would be politic in Virginia to prohibit the importation of foreign liquors and after being agitated with a great deal of warmth was decided in the negative.¹

Do you hold a poll for convention? I hope not; there will be so much contention & party work that I think it would be impossible to please. Write me on this subject & let me know your opinion about the proposed constitution. Its enemies here are daily increasing & new objections started, which induces me to think it will not be ratified untill amended.

Would write you more fully but have not time, am now fixing for my return to Wmsburg tomorrow morning. Have begun Blackstone & am exceedingly pleased with him; read scarcely any thing but Law neither do I intend it untill I obtain a licence.

Have caught the ague since I went to Wmsburg; it shook me pretty severely; but I believe have now got clear of it.

[P.S.] Pray write to me frequently.

1. In early November Patrick Henry introduced into the House of Delegates a bill to prohibit the importation of foreign distilled spirits and for imposing duties on certain imports. The bill was debated for some time and finally dropped on 27 December. On that day Edmund Randolph wrote James Madison: "The prohibition of the importation of spirituous liquors is gone & indeed cannot be executed, even if it was to be enacted into a law."

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