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ABSTRACT

MANNERS AND DIPLOMACY A HISTORY OF AMERICAN DIPLOMATIC ETIQUETTE AND PROTOCOL DURING THE EARLY NATIONAL PERIOD

by Robert Ralph Davis, Jr.

Beginning with the New England Puritans and their determination to create a New Zion in the American wilderness, most Americans were firmly convinced and even devoted to the idea that America was possessed of a special distinctiveness which clearly separated it from the cultural and political mainstream of the Old World. Accordingly, it was felt that American institutions and customs should reflect this distinctiveness as much as possible.

This idea assumed major proportions during the early national period. The evolution of American foreign policy after 1789, for example, was distinctly influenced by and ultimately based upon the doctrine of two spheres. The founding fathers recognized that the American republican experiment was essentially different from the prevailing monarchical regimes of Europe. On this account, it was considered wise to fashion a foreign policy that would reflect the principle of the separation of the New World from the Old. The image of two worlds soon became a dominant American idea, one which was expressed in the writings of most of the founding fathers.

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That the application of the implications of the doctrine of two spheres would remain confined to the formulation of foreign policy was unlikely. The development of American cultural nationalism, for instance, was profoundly influenced by such notions. It was thought that the creation of a national culture would in part justify America's independent station. The ability to develop a national art and literature would tend to validate the separation from the Old World and enhance American prestige as an independent nation abroad. During the early national period, therefore, many writers and artists in the United States occupied themselves with creating a civilization worthy of the New World.

The formulators of American diplomatic manners during the early national period, like the formulators of American foreign policy and American cultural nationalism, were searching for a way in which to express American individuality and the American national spirit. They were searching for and ultimately found an original modus operandi through which American republicanism could be properly proclaimed to the rest of the world. It is with this quest for an American code of diplomatic etiquette and protocol that this study is concerned.

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A HISTORY OF AMERICAN DIPLOMATIC ETIQUETTE AND PROTOCOL
DURING THE EARLY NATIONAL PERIOD

By

Robert Ralph Davis, Jr.

A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

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1968

PREFACE

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The wealth of information concerning American diplomatic etiquette and protocol found in the correspondence and memoirs of American statesmen and diplomats during this period is impressive. Accordingly, the formulation and construction of this dissertation has depended heavily upon these sources. Especially important in this regard have been the letters, despatches, and memoirs of John Quincy Adams. Although Adams repeatedly commented on his aversion to diplomatic punctilio, he nonetheless

punctiliously recorded in minute detail most of the salient characteristics of both European and American diplomatic manners during the early national period. Similarly, the writings of Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, and John Adams, to mention a few, have proved invaluable.

I am indebted to the staffs of the National Archives, the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress, the Michigan State University Library, the libraries of the University of Michigan, the Michigan State Library in Lansing, and the Ohio Northern University Library for the many courtesies shown to me in the course of my research.

I would also acknowledge the support and assistance given to me by my mentor and advisor, Dr. Gilman M. Ostrander. This dissertation would neither have been undertaken nor finished without his timely suggestions and thoughtful encouragement. Finally, but most importantly, I am indebted to Freida Carter Davis, my wife, whose love, understanding, and, above all, patience, provided the stamina necessary for the completion of this work.

R. R. D. Jr.

Ada, Ohio
August 1, 1967

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CHAPTER ONE

COURTS, CARDS, AND CIVILITIES

Early nineteenth century American statesmen and diplomats attempted to create a distinctly "American" brand of diplomatic etiquette and protocol divorced as much as possible from traditional modes of conduct. This quest for freshness and originality in American diplomatic manners was not an isolated phenomenon, but was intricately bound up with the development of American cultural nationalism and of American foreign policy in general. While Noah Webster was urging that America "be as independent in literature as she is in politics, as famous for arts as for arms,"¹ and while the founding fathers were formulating the guiding principles of an American foreign policy, men like Thomas Jefferson, James Monroe, and John Quincy Adams were striving to model American diplomatic etiquette and protocol along original lines.

Like Webster and the founding fathers, these statesmen were to find that a complete abandonment of their European heritage was not only undesirable and impractical but also impossible. Nevertheless, they did succeed during the early national period in giving American diplomatic etiquette and protocol a certain distinctive flavor which had the effect of setting it apart from traditional European usage.

This distinctiveness can be best appreciated by examining the diplomatic manners and usages which prevailed throughout the major European capitals during the latter part of the eighteenth and the first quarter of the nineteenth centuries.

European "court etiquette" as experienced and subsequently recorded by American ministers abroad not only provides a fairly accurate frame of reference for the judging of the relative difference between American and European usage, it also affords an illustration, in the form of the attitude conveyed in the numerous despatches, letters, and memoirs of these same American diplomats, of the unique mentality produced by American diplomatic etiquette itself. It must be kept constantly in mind, however, that these despatches, letters, and memoirs from American representatives abroad are merely describing the traditional and time-honored practices associated with orthodox eighteenth and nineteenth century European diplomacy. The Americans, quite naturally, were somewhat embarrassed at being exposed to the court niceties inherent in European diplomacy. On this account, therefore, their opinions are biased and prejudiced to an extent. On the other hand, it should not be forgotten that while Americans overseas were ridiculing the outlandishness of European court etiquette, the Europeans themselves, logically resenting the implications of American etiquette, were in turn ridiculing the Americans for being equally as outlandish in their dress and manners.²

Perhaps the most prominent feature characterizing the several royal courts of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Europe was the rigidity with which proprieties and niceties were actually observed and maintained. Although specific diplomatic usage varied in degree from court to court, James Gallatin's succinct description to the French court as being "hemmed in by etiquette" serves well as an all-inclusive characterization.³ Even the propriety-conscious John Adams admitted as early as 1782 that "ranks, titles, and etiquettes, and every species of punctilios, even down to the visits of cards, are of infinitely more importance in Europe than in America."⁴

No European court was complete, nor could its formalities and proprieties be maintained with any degree of thoroughness, without the services of a professional group of men in charge of regulating and enforcing the prevailing code of etiquette and diplomatic protocol. The ranking member of these elite coteries was generally a nobleman of high standing, variously entitled the master of ceremonies, the grand chamberlain, or the introducteur des Ambassadeurs. Differences in titles notwithstanding, their primary tasks were quite similar, involving the presentation of foreign ministers at court and the instruction of these ministers in the technicalities and intricacies of court procedure. At those courts where a high degree of emphasis was placed upon manners and etiquette, of course, the number of ceremonial officers correspondingly increased. Robert Livingston,

for example, wrote from Paris that while he was being "hedged in with forms," there existed "a grand Master of the Ceremonies, grand introductors, and grand and petit Chamberlains in such numbers" that any confusion which might arise in regard to court usage would be quickly dispelled.⁵

In addition to the master of ceremonies and his immediate assistants, the American diplomat also was confronted with a host of subordinate officials, who were not only extremely helpful and efficient in their duties, but also very quick to demand compensation for services rendered. On the day after his initial presentation at the Court of St. James, for instance, John Quincy Adams reported that he had "scarcely risen this morning, when the marshals, grooms, porters, and attendants at the palaces came to present their humble duty, bringing their books to show what had been paid them by all the foreign Ministers, and other persons presented at Court."⁶

Aside from instructing ministers on the proper mode of diplomatic dress and supervising the bestowal of token gifts upon foreign diplomats, "the trifling Contemplations of a Master of Ceremonies," according to John Adams, included the all-important formality of court presentation.⁷ That a diplomat's initial appearance at court was important cannot be denied. Most American ministers, however, were unable to reconcile the actual ceremony with the punctilios and proprieties attached to it. John Quincy Adams,

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serving as American minister plenipotentiary and envoy extraordinary to Russia, maintained that "the formalities of these court presentations are so trifling and insignificant in themselves, and so important in the eyes of princes and courtiers, that they are much more embarrassing to an American than business of real importance. It is not safe or prudent to despise them, nor practicable for a person of rational understanding to value them."⁸

Fortunately for the historian, American diplomatic representatives abroad during this period, almost to the man, faithfully recorded the minute details of their respective court presentations. Perhaps the two most interesting and revealing accounts are those furnished by John Adams and James A. Bayard.

After several seemingly frantic days of preparation, including endless conversations and interviews with the master of ceremonies and his staff, John Adams finally was presented as American minister to George III of Great Britain on June 2, 1785. Shortly after noon of the prescribed day, Sir Clement Cottrell Dormer, the master of ceremonies, called upon Adams at his home. They then both proceeded to the office of the Marquis of Carmarthen, one of the principal secretaries of state. Upon receiving further instructions as to the proper mode of behavior in the presence of His Majesty, Lord Carmarthen drove the American statesman to court in his coach. When they arrived in the antechamber of St. James's, the master of ceremonies

met and attended Adams, while the secretary of state went to secure the commands of the king. "While I stood in this place," Adams reported, "where it seems all ministers stand upon such occasions, always attended by the master of the ceremonies, the room very full of ministers of state, lords, and bishops, and all sorts of courtiers, you may well suppose I was the focus of all eyes."⁹ After several minutes of feverish waiting, Carmarthen returned and led Adams through the levee room into the king's bedchamber. "The door was shut," Adams wrote, "and I was left with his majesty and the secretary of state alone. I made the three reverences, - one at the door, another about half way, and a third before the presence, - according to the usage established at this and all the northern Courts of Europe."¹⁰ Following this courtly prostration, Adams proceeded to "harangue" His Majesty with the speech he had memorized in accordance with the instructions previously received, although his first inclination "had been to deliver my credentials silently and retire."¹¹ At the conclusion of Adams's discourse, King George "bowed to me, as is customary with all Kings and princes when they give the signal to retire. I retreated, stepping backward, as is the etiquette, and, making my last reverence at the door of the chamber, I went my way."¹²

Although John Adams's experience seems a bit rigorous at first glance, his encounter with court procedure appears much

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less demanding than that which greeted Albert Gallatin, John Quincy Adams, and James A. Bayard at St. Petersburg in 1813. This trio had been sent by President Madison to negotiate with British representatives, under the mediation of Tsar Alexander I, the existing grievances which had of late provoked war between the United States and Great Britain. On September 17, Gallatin, Adams, and Bayard formally were presented to the Empress Luisa Maria at the Winter Palace. According to Bayard's description of this event,

At the door we were received by a page richly dressed and with plumes in his bonnet who conducted us thro a very long hall and led us up stairs. At the head of the stair we left our surtouts and servants. A door opened and we were received by an officer of the palace, without a livery or uniform. He conducted us thro his Apartment to the door of another. Upon the door being opened we were saluted by a chambellan who led us thro the Apartment to another. In this we were received by Mr. de Swistounoff chambellan actual de S. M. and passing thro it, in another we were received by Mr. Narishkin, Grand Maitre des Ceremonies. He conducted us to another Apartment and delivered us into the hands of Le Grand Chambellan Naryschkin, who attended us to the door of the Apartment in which we found her majesty. In approaching her majesty we had three bows to make, which she returned by a slight inclination of the body. The audience continued about five minutes.¹³

In addition to being presented to the reigning monarch or chief of state, the American diplomat was often required to present himself to the immediate members of the royal family in much

the same fashion. At the French court in 1778, for example, John Adams formally presented himself to "the King, Queen, Monsieur the Kings oldest Brother, the Count D'Artois the Kings youngest Brother, to Madame Elizabeth the Kings Sister and to the Kings two Aunts."¹⁴ In most cases, the foreign minister was expected to "harangue" each individual member of the royal family.¹⁵ In Russia, moreover, court etiquette demanded that diplomats kiss the hand of the Empress and that of the Empress Dowager upon the conclusion of the formal presentation, the omission of which being considered an unpardonable offence.¹⁶ In Great Britain, it was customary for the diplomat to come to court with two letters of credence, one for the King and another for the Queen. Early American diplomats apparently neglected this usage, considering it both unnecessary and bothersome. In 1816, however, the master of ceremonies advised John Quincy Adams that future ministerial appointments to the Court of St. James should be furnished with a letter of credence for Her Majesty also, "the omission of which," he was told, "she is not insensible."¹⁷ Accordingly, when Richard Rush replaced Adams as minister plenipotentiary and envoy extraordinary in 1818, the new minister carried with him two sets of credentials.¹⁸

The American diplomat in Europe assumed his official capacity as ministerial representative of the United States only upon the completion of the formal presentations and the delivery of his

credentials. Until that time, he remained a private citizen, entitled to none of those privileges commonly held by diplomatic characters. Indeed, the delivery of credentials was a prerequisite at most court functions, including levees, drawing rooms, coronations, and state funerals.¹⁹ Moreover, European court etiquette generally stipulated that a minister's official character promptly terminated upon the death or resignation of the sovereign to whom the letter of credence had been addressed originally. Aside from being contrary to American etiquette, which did not require new credentials upon such occasions, this requirement proved to be an annoying inconvenience to American ministers abroad, who were transformed ipso facto into private citizens once again, pending the arrival of credentials addressed to the new sovereign.²⁰

In 1817 John Quincy Adams, perhaps the most experienced and knowledgeable diplomat America had hitherto produced, received the appointment of Secretary of State in the administration of James Monroe. His qualifications for such a vital position were varied and impressive to say the least. Serving his diplomatic apprenticeship as the youthful secretary and interpreter to Francis Dana, American envoy to Russia in 1781, and, in a more informal sense, as a secretary to the American commissioners during the negotiation of the peace terms which concluded the American Revolution, Adams

subsequently was appointed to ministerial posts at The Hague, Berlin, St. Petersburg, and London, respectively.²¹ Shortly after assuming his duties at the Department of State, the new Secretary, displaying an unusual intimacy with European court etiquette and protocol, issued a "Form of Personal Instructions," directed to all American diplomats abroad. "You will find the advantage of an observance, rather punctilious than negligent," he advised American ministers, "of the customary attentions to the person and family of the Sovereign to whom you are accredited. As the intercourse between them and foreign Ministers is altogether formal and superficial," Adams continued, "they attach much importance to the usages of courtesy, which they habitually receive -- Constant attendance at the Circles held by them for the reception of foreign Ministers, a suitable, respectful but not obtrusive Deportment in their presence, a due regard to the occasions upon which minute but established civilities of visiting or sending cards of enquiry, are to be shewn them, are the most affective modes of acquiring their esteem and good will, neither of which are to be despised."²²

Habitual and punctual attendance at court, as John Quincy Adams well knew, was, therefore, an "indispensable obligation" expected of all American diplomats abroad. At St. Petersburg, for example, it was "most frequently twice in a day, the morning at a levee, and the same evening at a ball and supper."²³ In addition

to the royal levees, dinners, and balls, as well as state funerals, coronations, and, in the case of France and Russia, Te Deums, the American minister quickly discovered that attendance at the drawing rooms of the Queen or Empress, whichever the case might be, was equally obligatory on his part.²⁴

More often than not, royal drawing rooms and levees featured the unique custom of a cercle diplomatique, whereby the assemblage formed itself into a large circle, generally according to rank and precedence. At that point any number of things might happen, depending for the most part upon the personal whims of the reigning sovereigns. John Quincy Adams reported that diplomatic circles in Great Britain during his residence were quite formal, the King or Queen assuming a position on a throne or canopied sofa, politely speaking or nodding to individual ministers and their wives as the cercle diplomatique moved in a clockwise fashion.²⁵ This procedure, however, appears to have been the exception to the rule. More commonly, as the experiences of John and Abigail Adams testify, the cercle remained stationary, while the royal personages travelled around it, speaking briefly "on the weather or other topic equally important," according to Thomas Pinckney, to each individual in attendance.²⁶

Abigail Adams has left a rather interesting account of her initial attendance at a royal drawing room in England. At two

o'clock in the afternoon on June 23, 1785, trumpets announced the approach of royalty to the two hundred individuals gathered in the Queen's drawing room to signal the formation of a cercle. Once this had been accomplished, King George III and Queen Charlotte made their royal appearance at the door, where they separated and proceeded, with their respective attendants, upon their journey around the cercle, the Queen beginning on the left side and the King on the right. "The royal family," according to Mrs. Adams, "have to go round to every person, and find small talk enough to speak to all of them, though they very prudently speak in a whisper, so that only the person who stands next you can hear what is said." The occasion of a cercle, moreover, must have been a gruelling experience, both for the royalty and for their guests. Mrs. Adams wrote that she stood waiting in the same position for over two hours between her chat with the King and her tête-à-tête with his royal spouse, not to mention the two additional hours which preceded and followed her privileged encounters.²⁷

The fatigue and general uncomfortableness engendered by royal levees and drawing rooms proved much less of an irritant to American diplomats than the inconvenience and the seemingly absurd practices associated with the complex phenomenon of European card-etiquette.²⁸ After a minister assumed his official capacity, the ceremonial office generally forwarded to him a list of names to whom

he was expected to make visits.²⁹ This list would include the less important members of the royal family, administrative and governmental officials, especially heads of departments, high ranking military officers, and, of course, fellow members of the corps diplomatique. Etiquette dictated that the new minister would take the initiative and make the first visit to those upon his list, although John Adams discovered in 1785 that the British practice was "directly contrary to that in Holland and France. Here the new Minister receives the first Visit, from all the foreign Ministers, whereas in France and Holland the new Minister makes the first Visit to all the foreign Ministers and notifies formally to them his Reception."³⁰

A diplomatic visit of form could be executed in any number of ways. At St. Petersburg, for example, it was customary to pay the first visit by card exclusively, a method considered by John Quincy Adams as being "one of the most inconvenient and absurd but best established usages of this place." In short, etiquette required that the minister make a round of visits, fully dressed in court costume, "leaving cards at every house without enquiring whether the persons visited are at home, or ever getting out of the carriage." Adams further added that it would not suffice "to send a servant with a card, nor even to send round your carriage; nay, if you go yourself, unless it be in full dress the visit is not duly

paid. You must be seen in full dress by all the porters; but it is understood that you are only to leave a card."³¹

It was expected, of course, that all diplomatic visits, be they by card or in person, were to be returned in a similar fashion. While in France, Benjamin Franklin chose to neglect this "indispensable punctilio," thereby causing "great offence" to those he apparently had slighted.³² Yet one can hardly blame the venerable gout-ridden Franklin for this omission, considering the time element involved and the circumstance that the average visiting list numbered well over a hundred, and at times, as in the case of Gallatin, Adams, and Bayard in 1813, upwards of two hundred.³³

Although card-etiquette and diplomatic visiting was considered by many as being especially vital, its importance in no way compares to the attention given questions involving diplomatic rank and precedence. During the Middle Ages, rank and precedence among diplomats was generally determined according to the antiquity of the states they represented. This original theory had been carried over into the early modern period and was best exemplified by the table of rank and precedence which Pope Julius II had composed in 1504. According to this table, diplomatic representatives of the Holy Roman Emperor took precedence over all others. Following them came the representatives

of the King of France, the King of Spain, and so on down to the smaller dukes, despots, and princes. Diplomatic representatives of the King of England, according to the Pope's classification, ranked seventh on the list. With the emergence of the modern European national states and the shifting power-relationships among these states, it was inevitable that the diplomatic classification of 1504 would be disputed. The Spanish, for instance, refused to accept the fact that they had been ranked lower than the French. Accordingly, precedence disputes between the French and Spanish diplomatic representatives became an embarrassing element in the functions of every European court. These and other disputes over rank and precedence would continue throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries.³⁴

Moreover, during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, most governments, including the United States, recognized a four-rung ladder of ascendancy within the diplomatic corps itself, with ambassadors and papal legates and nuncios assuming the first rank, ministers plenipotentiary and envoys second, ministers resident third, and *chargés d'affaires* fourth.³⁵ Much to the dismay of those ministers below the ambassadorial rank, this arbitrary and inherently unequal classification was followed punctiliously throughout Europe. Upon his presentation at the French court in 1778, John Adams found that "neither the King or any of

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the Royal Family, commonly spoke to any of the Corps Diplomatique, except the first order, the Ambassadors."³⁶ Ministers to Russia were more fortunate, however, as the royalty there condescended enough to include ministers of the second order among those to whom they would speak.³⁷ In Great Britain, John Quincy Adams, Rufus King, and, later, Martin Van Buren, discovered that although the royal family spoke to all foreign ministers regardless of rank, diplomats below the first order generally were looked down upon and often relegated to an inferior position within the court hierarchy.³⁸ John Adams even wrote that his diplomatic rank was "extremely humiliating," explaining that "at Versailles, at Madrid, at the Hague, and at London, the difference between ambassadors and ministers plenipotentiary or envoys is so immense, that the latter are little more regarded than the maître d'hôtel of a minister of state."³⁹

Diplomatic representatives of the United States had special cause for complaint in regard to this matter, as no American minister possessed rank higher than that of the second order. Although John Quincy Adams magnanimously adopted the principle "to dispute upon precedence with nobody," other American diplomats, including Adams himself in reality, were not so impervious as to what they considered insults to their national honor and dignity.⁴⁰ Rufus King, for instance, complained that while in

mourning-dress for General Washington in 1800, the British royalty displayed a genuine "want of magnanimity" by the "disrespectful omission" of taking "no notice of the occasion of my being in mourning."⁴¹ Furthermore, shortly after assuming his duties as American minister to Great Britain, James Monroe found himself seated between representatives of two small German principalities at a state dinner. Highly incensed at being placed between diplomats from "two little principalities no bigger than my farm in Albemarle," Monroe made a point of splashing his wine glass in a convenient finger bowl on the occasion of a toast to the King of England. While his German neighbors exchanged sarcastic smiles, the Russian ambassador, sensing Monroe's discomfort, rose to offer his toast to the American minister and to the President of the United States. This apparently satisfied the spunky Virginian, and the dinner proceeded without further incident.⁴²

Despite the apparent concern evinced over diplomatic rank and precedence by Monroe, King, and others, it should not be assumed that American ministers abroad were merely punctiliously-minded court dandies, overly preoccupied with the observance of ceremonious niceties. On the contrary, it seems more logical to suppose that their objections were based more upon nationalistic aspirations than upon personal motivations. With few exceptions, American ministers felt, as the dean of

diplomats, John Quincy Adams wrote, that nothing existed "so despicable, and nothing so indispensable as the science of forms."⁴³

Most of them would have agreed with Richard Rush, who in 1819 asserted that "international courtesy . . . embodies international wisdom" and who, one year later, bitterly pondered the question as to "what point our Republick is behind the British monarchy in dignity, and yet what are not the acts of ceremonious homage, to give them no other appellation, which the minister of the former is compelled to go through here from which the British minister with us is exempt."⁴⁴ In other words, American diplomatic representatives abroad found themselves sitting squarely upon the horns of a perplexing dilemma. On the other hand, they genuinely resented European codes of diplomatic etiquette and protocol. On the other hand, however, they were farsighted enough to realize that the existence of harmonious international relations depended, in part, upon acceptance of and acquiescence to the elaborate court customs of the Old World.

For the same reason, it was quickly recognized on the domestic front that the United States could hardly divorce itself entirely from traditional European diplomatic manners in its treatment of foreign ministers. On this account, American diplomatic etiquette and protocol during the early national period borrowed liberally from European forms and usages. The Americans,

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however, did manage to add a distinctive touch to their diplomatic manners during this period -- a distinctiveness which, for lack of a better term, can be called republican simplicity.

¹ Cited in Gerald N. Grob and Robert N. Beck, eds., American Ideas: Source Readings in the Intellectual History of the United States (New York: Free Press, 1963), I, 255.

² No single study adequately discusses European diplomatic etiquette and protocol during this period. On this account, the letters and memoirs of American diplomats during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries have proved invaluable in formulating the substance of this chapter.

³ James Gallatin, The Diary of James Gallatin, Secretary to Albert Gallatin, A Great Peace Maker, 1813-1827, ed. Count Gallatin (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916), 96 ff.

⁴ John Adams to Robert Livingston, November 8, 1782, in Francis Wharton, ed., The Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States, 6 vols. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1889), V, 864-65.

⁵ Robert Livingston to James Madison, November 17, 1804, in National Archives Manuscripts (hereafter cited as N.A. MSS.), U. S. Department of State, Despatches from United States Ministers to France, IX, reel 9 (microcopy).

⁶ John Quincy Adams, Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, Comprising Portions of His Diary from 1795 to 1848, 12 vols., ed. Charles Francis Adams (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1874-77), III, 217. Hereafter cited as JQA Memoirs.

⁷ "Diary of John Adams," in John Adams, et al., The Adams Papers, 5 vols to date, ed. Lyman H. Butterfield, (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1961-67), series I, III, 11.

⁸ JQA Memoirs, II, 50.

⁹ John Adams to John Jay, June 2, 1785, in John Adams, The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States, with A Life of the Author, 10 vols., ed. Charles Francis Adams (Boston: Little, Brown, 1856), VIII, 266. Hereafter cited as Adams, Works.

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¹⁰Ibid. Such also was the court usage at St. Petersburg. On this see JQA Memoirs, II, 537.

¹¹John Adams to John Jay, June 2, 1785, in Adams, Works, VIII, 255.

¹²Ibid., 258. For further details concerning Adams's court presentation, see John Adams to John Jay, May 30, 1785, and June 1, 1785, in Ibid., 254, and Abigail Adams to Mrs. Cranch, June 24, 1785, in Abigail Adams, Letters of Mrs. Adams, The Wife of John Adams, 2 vols., ed. Charles Francis Adams (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1840), II, 96 ff.

¹³James A. Bayard, Papers of James A. Bayard, 1796-1815, ed. Elizabeth Donnan, in American Historical Association, Annual Report, 1913 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1915), II, 474-75. For additional examples of European court presentations experienced by American diplomats, see JQA Memoirs, I, 144-45, II, 50-57, and III, 213-17; "Diary of John Adams," in Adams Papers (series I), II, 309-10; Library of Congress, Presidential Papers Microfilm, James Monroe Papers (hereafter cited as Monroe MSS.), series 3, reel 10, Letterbook I, 47-48; and James Monroe, The Autobiography of James Monroe, ed. Stuart G. Brown (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1959), 184-85. Although the court presentations described by Adams and Bayard represent the dominant pattern throughout Europe during this era, it should not be assumed that this pattern was in itself universal. The turbulent years of the Revolution in France, for example, witnessed a remarkable laxity in regard to court etiquette and protocol. Perhaps the best example illustrating this lack of punctilio at the French court is the reception accorded to James Monroe during his formal presentation to the Convention in 1794. On this see, for instance, Beverly W. Bond, Jr., The Monroe Mission to France, 1794-1796 (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1907), 15-17; W. P. Cresson, James Monroe (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1946), 129 ff.; Monroe, Autobiography, 59 and 62-64; and Beckles Willson, America's Ambassadors to France, 1777-1927 (New York: Stokes, 1928), 66.

¹⁴"Autobiography of John Adams," in Adams Papers (series I), IV, 93.

¹⁵See, for example, JQA Memoirs, III, 318.

¹⁶Ibid., II, 50-57.

¹⁷John Quincy Adams to James Monroe, March 30, 1816, in N.A. MSS., U.S. Department of State, Despatches from United States Ministers to Great Britain, 1791-1906 (hereafter cited as Despatches, Great Britain), XX, reel 16.

¹⁸Richard Rush to John Quincy Adams, March 2, 1818, in Ibid., XXII, reel 18.

¹⁹Sir Robert Chester to Richard Rush (copy), n.d., in Ibid., XXVI, reel 22, and JQA Memoirs, II, 601, and III, 316.

²⁰John Quincy Adams to Timothy Pickering, December 6, 1797, in John Quincy Adams, Writings of John Quincy Adams, 7 vols., ed. Worthington C. Ford (New York: Macmillan, 1913-17), II, 229-31 (hereafter cited as JQA Writings); John Quincy Adams to John Adams, December 16, 1797, in Ibid., II, 233; N.A. MSS., Despatches, Great Britain, XXIX, reel 20; and Green Haywood Hackworth, Digest of International Law, 8 vols. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1940-43), IV, 439-40.

²¹By far the best account of John Quincy Adams's diplomatic career is found in Samuel Flagg Bemis, John Quincy Adams and the Foundations of American Foreign Policy (New York: Knopf, 1965), 50-243.

²²John Quincy Adams, "Form of Personal Instructions to the Ministers of the United States -- to be variously modified in particular cases," in Microfilms of the Adams Papers owned by the Adams Manuscript Trust and deposited in the Massachusetts Historical Society, reel 439. Hereafter cited as Adams MSS.

²³John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, February 8, 1810, in JQA Writings, III, 395.

²⁴See, for example, Richard Rush, Memoranda of a Residence at the Court of London, Comprising Incidents Official and Personal from 1819 to 1825 (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1845), 147 and 248-49, and JQA Memoirs, II, 57. The French court seems to have been especially insistent upon foreign ministers attending Te Deums. In 1830, for example, the absence of William Rives from a court-sponsored Te Deum was made the subject of a paragraph in a Parisian newspaper. On this see William Rives to Martin Van Buren, July 17, 1830, in House Executive Document 147, 22 Cong. 2 Sess., 138.

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- ²⁵ JQA Memoirs, III, 321-22.
- ²⁶ Cited in Samuel Flagg Bemis, "The London Mission of Thomas Pinckney, 1792-1796," in American Historical Review, XXVIII, No. 2 (January 1923), 232-33.
- ²⁷ Abigail Adams to Mrs. Cranch, June 24, 1785, in Letters of Mrs. Adams, II, 102-103, and Janet Whitney, Abigail Adams (Boston: Little, Brown, 1948), 201-202.
- ²⁸ JQA Memoirs, II, 264-65.
- ²⁹ Bayard, Papers, 475, and JQA Memoirs, II, 56.
- ³⁰ John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, May 27, 1785, in Thomas Jefferson, The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, 17 vols. to date, ed. Julian P. Boyd (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950-67), VIII, 167.
- ³¹ JQA Memoirs, II, 264-65.
- ³² "Autobiography," in Adams Papers (series I), IV, 58.
- ³³ Bayard, Papers, 475. For additional insight into European card-etiquette see "Diary," in Adams Papers (series I), III, 11, and JQA Memoirs, I, 59, II, 55, 57, 78, 95 and 309, and III, 320, 410, and 468.
- ³⁴ C. W. Thayer, Diplomat (New York: Harper, 1959), 224-26, and Harold Nicolson, The Evolution of the Diplomatic Method (London: Constable, 1954), 42-47.
- ³⁵ Sir Ernest Satow, A Guide to Diplomatic Practice (4th ed., London: Longmans, 1958), 162-64. Subsequently codified by the congresses of Vienna (1814-15) and Aix-la-Chapelle (1818), this classification was not adopted by the United States officially until 1897.
- ³⁶ "Autobiography," in Adams Papers (series I), IV, 93.
- ³⁷ JQA Memoirs, II, 95.

³⁸Ibid., III, 416; Rufus King to John Marshall, February 28, 1800, in N. A. MSS., Despatches, Great Britain, VIII, reel 6; Martin Van Buren to Edward Livingston, March 14, 1832, in Library of Congress, Presidential Papers Microfilm, Martin Van Buren Papers (hereafter cited as Van Buren MSS.), series 2; reel 11; Edward Livingston to Martin Van Buren, February 4, 1832, in N. A. MSS., Department of State, Diplomatic Instructions of the Department of State, 1801-1906, Great Britain (hereafter cited as Instructions, Great Britain), XIV, reel 14, 121-22; and Robert Chester to Mr. Blackhouse, n.d., Mr. Blackhouse to Martin Van Buren, March 13, 1832, and Lord Palmerston to Martin Van Buren, March 13, 1832, in N. A. MSS., Despatches, Great Britain, XXXVIII, reel 34. For similar accounts see William Short to Thomas Jefferson, May 15, 1792, in The Papers of William Short, Library of Congress Manuscripts (hereafter cited as Short MSS.), XX, 3462-3463, and Bayard, Papers, 496.

³⁹John Adams to John Jay, January 24, 1787, in Adams, Works, VIII, 423.

⁴⁰JQA Memoirs, II, 465.

⁴¹Rufus King to John Marshall, February 28, 1800, in N. A. MSS., Despatches, Great Britain, VIII, reel 6.

⁴²Cited in Beckles Willson, America's Ambassadors to England, 1785-1929 (New York: Stokes, 1929), 78.

⁴³John Quincy Adams to William Short, November 21, 1794, in JQA Writings, I, 217.

⁴⁴Rush, Memoranda, 100, and Richard Rush to James Monroe, February 6, 1820, in Monroe MSS. (series I), reel 7.

CHAPTER TWO

REPUBLICAN SIMPLICITY

It was not until the establishment of the national government in 1789 that American diplomatic etiquette and protocol began to assume a distinctiveness all of its own. During the period of the Confederation, American diplomatic etiquette and protocol was little more than a pale replica of British court procedure. This adherence to Old World punctilio did not go unnoticed. Even propriety-conscious Englishmen expressed surprise at the progress of European manners in America. "In Philadelphia," reported Benjamin Vaughan to the Earl of Shelburne in 1782, "it is an etiquette even with the gravest men, to be full drest on some occasions."¹ Although the reluctance to disassociate behaviorial patterns from established European usages in matters of form and etiquette permeated many facets of American life during the Confederation era, it is in the diplomatic realm that this phenomenon assumes a crystalization especially worthy of consideration.

Throughout the records of the Continental Congress habitual reference is made to the "Court of the United States." Congressional representatives evidently considered their government a "court" and, on that account, several interesting attempts were made to create a system of court precedence and

etiquette. On September 18, 1786, for example, Congress decided upon a hierarchy of precedence to be observed "at the Court of the United States." At the head of the list was "His Excellency the President of Congress," followed by "The Honorable the Delegates in Congress, The Honorable the Secretary of Congress, The Honorable the Secretary for Foreign Affairs, The Honorable the Secretary at War, The Honorable the Commissioners of the Treasury," and finally, the foreign ministers representing their respective nations in America. It was further agreed "that all foreign Ministers be received at the Court of the United States in conformity to their rank and that to the usage of Europe," and that a master of ceremonies, an indispensable figure at any court, be appointed to supervise and administer matters of delicacy such as these.² Considering the elaborate ritual which Congress established for the reception of foreign ministers, it seems strange that the "Gentlemen of Congress," as they styled themselves, never did appoint an official master of ceremonies in accordance with the recommendations of 1786.³

Borrowing heavily from the vast European storehouse of niceties and proprieties, the Confederation Congress created a system of court etiquette which must have proved ominous to proponents of republican simplicity like Thomas Jefferson, who wrote

from France that it would have been far better for the Confederation government to have "excluded etiquette altogether."⁴

Initially, Congress provided that foreign ministers plenipotentiary and envoys extraordinary were to be accorded "military honors as are paid to a general officer of the second rank in the armies of the United States." Upon his arrival at the seat of government, a foreign minister was expected to "wait upon the President and deliver his credentials. Two members of Congress shall then be deputed to wait upon him and inform him where and when he shall receive audience of Congress."

At the time he is to receive his audience the two members shall again wait upon him in a coach belonging to the States, and the person first named of the two shall return with the minister plenipotentiary or envoy in the coach, giving the minister the right hand, and placing himself on the left, with the other member on the front seat.

Having arrived at Congress, the foreign dignitary "shall be introduced to his chair by the two members, who shall stand at his left hand." The Secretary of Foreign Affairs would then introduce the minister to the President of Congress and to Congress assembled, "whereupon he shall bow to the President and Congress, and they to him. He and the President shall then again bow to each other and be seated, after which the House shall sit down." During this procedure, it was expected that the minister, unless he held ambassadorial rank, would remain "uncovered," that is,

having his hat removed, while Congress, on the other hand, would remain "covered." At this point, the minister would address the members of Congress, summarizing the content of the credential letter previously delivered. During his speech, Congress would remain seated. Upon its conclusion, Congress would rise to hear its President respond to the ministerial address. "Having spoken, and being answered," it was explained, "the minister and the President shall bow to each other, at which time the House shall bow, and then the minister shall be conducted home in the manner in which he was brought to the House." Following these formalities, each minister was required to pay the first visit to the President and to every member of Congress so that he might announce his official capacity on an individual basis.⁵

Jefferson and other American advocates of republican simplicity were not alone in questioning the propriety of the meticulous etiquette established by Congress. Foreign ministers themselves seem to have resented being exposed to this rigorous ceremony. The Comte de Moustier, for example, complained to the French foreign office that American ceremonial was "very demanding," having "little analogy to that which is used in the republican states in Europe."⁶

Fortunately for admirers of democratic manners, the life span of the Confederation was relatively short. The establishment

of the Federal government and the election of George Washington to the presidency, however, did not end the "monarchical tendencies" of American diplomatic etiquette and protocol. Vestiges of European court etiquette were to remain throughout the administrations of Washington and John Adams. Nevertheless, the evolution of American republican simplicity in matters concerning diplomatic etiquette and protocol did have its inception during the regimes of America's first two presidents.

From the sixth of April, when the electoral votes were counted, until Washington's inauguration on the thirtieth, Congress busied itself with the establishing of laws providing for the creation of executive departments and for the levying and collection of taxes. In addition, the new senators and representatives were confronted with a number of questions involving etiquette and protocol. According to Senator William Maclay, the amount of time devoted to the establishment of precedents in matters of form and etiquette was inordinate. Maclay, a thoroughgoing Pennsylvania democrat, repeatedly commented in his Journal on the "endless business" of ceremony dictated by the "Goddess of Etiquette" which Congress seemed preoccupied with during the several weeks prior to the inauguration.⁷

There was, for example, the question of deciding the proper order of precedence to be observed whenever the President

of the United States addressed the Senate in person. Inasmuch as the Constitution provided that the Vice-President was to assume the title of President of the Senate whenever that body was in session, the flustered John Adams anxiously asked his colleagues: "When the President comes into the Senate, what shall I be? I can not be [President] then. No, gentlemen, I can not, I can not. I wish gentlemen to think what I shall be." Having expounded at length upon what was apparently a very perplexing and frustrating point of etiquette, Adams, "as if oppressed with a sense of his distressed situation, threw himself back in his chair." Senator Maclay reported that this scene was so absurd, and at the same time highly humorous, that "the profane muscles of my face were in tune for laughter in spite of my indisposition." Then, on April 30, just several hours before Washington was to make his appearance, Adams, who, according to Senator Maclay, believed "that good manners consists entirely in punctilios," once again queried the Senate: "Gentlemen, I wish for the direction of the Senate. The President will, I suppose, address the Congress. How shall I behave? How shall we receive it? Shall it be standing or sitting?"⁸

Perhaps the most controversial issue to confront Congress during this period involved the question as to whether or not the President and other administration officials should have titles

conferred upon them. Despite the constitutional clause providing that "no title of nobility shall be granted by the United States," John Adams and Richard Henry Lee pushed through a resolution in the Senate on April 23 which created a committee to consider the advisability of granting titles to high-ranking members of the administration.⁹ Fervent republicans like Senator Maclay, of course, denounced "this base business" of titles, considering it part and parcel of "the folleries, fopperies, fineries, and pomp of royal etiquette."¹⁰ Little was accomplished by the Senate committee prior to Washington's inauguration, but shortly thereafter it merged with several members of the House of Representatives, thereby creating a joint-committee for the consideration of an appropriate title for the President.

John Adams, who felt that "decent and moderate titles, as distinctions of offices, are not only harmless, but useful in society,"¹¹ was beyond doubt the primary advocate of titles in the Senate, being seconded, according to James Madison, "with all the force and urgency of natural temper by Richard Henry Lee."¹² Adams felt that the simple appellation of "President of the United States" was entirely too plain and simple to apply to the chief executive of the American nation, reminding his colleagues "that there were presidents of fire companies and of a cricket club."¹³ The Vice-President thought that "His Elective Majesty" was an

appropriate title to bestow upon Washington and, furthermore, that the President's cook could be entitled the "Steward of the Household," while the Senate sergeants-at-arms might be designated as "Ushers of the Black Rod."¹⁴ "The President," according to Adams, "must be himself something that includes all the dignities of the diplomatic corps and something greater still. What will the common people of foreign countries, what will the sailors and soldiers say, 'George Washington, President of the United States'? They will despise him to all eternity."¹⁵ Meanwhile, Richard Henry Lee not only supported Adams in his so-called "passion for titles," but also advocated the erection of a canopied seat within the halls of Congress to accommodate the President whenever he might choose to address to two houses.¹⁶

Finally, on May 5, the congressional joint-committee on titles made its report, advising against titles or appellations beyond those specified in the Constitution. Then, according to James Madison's biographer Irving Brant, "the death blow" was engineered by Madison, who marshaled enough support in the House to accept the committee report. Immediately thereafter, without waiting for the Senate's decision, Madison addressed the House reply to Washington's inaugural speech "to George Washington, President of the United States."¹⁷ In the meantime, the Senate rejected the joint-committee's report and requested a conference to consider the matter

further. The Senate conferees, led by Lee, proposed the title of "His Highness the President of the United States of America and Protector of the Rights of the Same,"¹⁸ but the House conferees, headed by Madison, soundly rejected this pretension. Madison himself felt that titles "diminish the true dignity and importance of a Republic, and would in particular, on this occasion, diminish the true dignity of the first magistrate himself."¹⁹ At any rate, the Senate subsequently was obliged to follow the House's lead and, despite the lamentations of Adams and Lee, adopted the joint-committee's report rejecting titles.

Posterity has taken John Adams to task for his apparent penchant for titles and his alleged monarchical tendencies. During his official residence in Europe, Adams had soundly condemned the "voluminous ceremonial" which was hoisted upon the shoulders of foreign ministers.²⁰ Furthermore, he felt that "the sublime Science of Etiquette," at least when American republicans were concerned, was an "idle farce," better to be left in Europe than imported into the United States.²¹ Upon being elected to the vice-presidency and, later, to the presidency, however, Adams, according to many critics, was transformed from an ardent supporter of republican simplicity into a chronic sufferer from that malady which William Macclay called "nobilimania."²² There is no denying that Adams sincerely advocated the adoption of titles for high governmental officials. But

this does not necessarily imply that he was any less of a republican than William Maclay or Thomas Jefferson. On the contrary, his "passion for titles" was motivated almost entirely by practical considerations and nationalistic aspirations.

During June and July of 1789, Adams and Benjamin Rush exchanged a series of friendly, though at times barbed, letters. Adams, for the most part, was intent upon justifying his defense of titles and of reaffirming his dedication to republican principles. Every human institution, according to his philosophy, used and was dependent upon titles. "Family titles are necessary to family government, colonial titles we know are indispensible in colonial government; and we shall find national titles essential to national government."²³ Titles, by their very nature, were essential in regard to the recognition of authority and respect. "What would you say or think or feel," he asked Rush, "if your children, instead of calling you Sir, Father, or Pappa should accost you with the title of Ben?" While reaffirming his devotion to and faith in republican principles, he further maintained that there "never will be, because there never can be, any Gov't without Titles & Pageantry."²⁴ Finally, Adams stated that titles are "necessary to give dignity and energy to government, and on this ground alone I am an advocate for them. In my private character I despise them as much at least as any Quaker or Philosopher on earth."²⁵

In the midst of the farcical duel between Adams and Madison over titles and punctilios, General Washington was inaugurated as the nation's first President during a dignified and simple ceremony on April 30. Arriving at the seat of Congress in an impressive state coach drawn by a magnificent team of four horses, Washington was attired in a simple dark brown suit. "His legs were encased in white stockings and silver buckles graced his shoes. He carried a dress sword with a steel hilt and his hair was dressed and powdered in the fashion of the day." Once in the Senate chamber, the new President occupied an elevated chair "under a rich canopy of crimson damask" to the right of Vice-President Adams. "As the President rose to deliver his inaugural address, the members of both houses also stood up and remained so during the duration of the speech, thereby settling the argument which had been waged several hours earlier on the proper method of procedure."²⁶

Less than two weeks after his inauguration, Washington was confronted with a series of problems involving etiquette and protocol. "I was unable to attend to any business whatsoever," the President later wrote to David Stuart, "for Gentlemen, consulting their own convenience rather than mine, were calling from the time I rose from breakfast, often before, until I sat down to dinner."²⁷ Washington found that his valuable time in these first few weeks was being preempted by "foreign characters, Strangers,

and others," who, for various reasons, felt compelled to visit the chief executive. Moreover, etiquette dictated that official visits from foreign ministers and diplomats be returned in person. "At the outset," according to Douglas Southall Freeman, "nothing could be done about this drain on Washington's time, without giving offence to persons whose good will was unmistakable, even if the main reason for their visits was curiosity or vanity; but a man as conscientious as the General in the discharge of business could not even contemplate a life given over to handshaking and civilities."²⁸

During the first week of May 1789 Washington asked the principal members of his administration for their opinions and advice in regard to this matter. Although the original inquiries were orally transmitted, Washington later recorded the substance of them in his "Queries on a Line of Conduct to be Pursued by the President" written on May 10.

Addressing his "queries" to Alexander Hamilton, John Adams, John Jay, and James Madison, the President desired to know "whether a line of conduct, equally distant from an association with all kinds of company on the one hand and from a total seclusion from Society on the other, ought to be adopted by him?" If so, how might this be accomplished without alienating too many individuals? Washington also solicited advice as to how many

presidential levees and general entertainments should be held annually. Should these levees and entertainments be formal or informal? Should they be open to the general public or only to invited guests? Finally, the President asked "whether there would be any impropriety" in his making informal visits; "that is to say, in his calling upon his Acquaintances or public Characters for the purposes of socialibility or civility." The President concluded by asserting that his primary objective was to discover a system of presidential etiquette which would "maintain the dignity of Office, without subjecting himself to the imputation of superciliousness or unnecessary reserve."²⁹

Hamilton and Adams composed lengthy replies to the President's inquiries, whereas the answers of Jay and Madison were probably delivered orally, as they have not been found.³⁰ Both Hamilton and Adams warned the President to avoid extremes -- to avoid becoming what William Maclay referred to as an "Eastern Lama" on the one hand or developing, according to John Adams, "an association with all kinds of company" on the other.³¹ Hamilton advised the President that one levee a week was more than sufficient, while Adams liberally conceded that two levees a week might prove to be more popular.

Both agreed that an element of selection and regulation would be desirable in regard to those deeming it necessary to see

the President. Hamilton, for instance, felt that the levees should be open "only to those who were introduced properly," whereas Adams argued that access to the levees "should be allowed with proper scrutiny of those persons who sought admission."³² In regard to Washington's presence at these affairs, Adams felt that "some limitation of time may be necessary, as, for example, from eight to nine or ten; for, without it, the whole forenoon, or the whole day, may be taken up."³³ Hamilton was not as generous with the President's time: "The President to remain half an hour, in which time he may converse cursorily on indifferent subjects with such persons as shall strike his attention, and at the end of that half hour disappear."³⁴

Hamilton thought it advisable for the President to hold two or four public entertainments a year, but Adams maintained that "in no case whatever can I conceive it proper for the President to make any formal public entertainment."³⁵ On most of the other matters, however, they were essentially in agreement. Although they felt that there can be "no impropriety in the President's making or receiving informal visits among his friends or acquaintances," both strenuously urged that the President refrain from making or returning visits in his official capacity as chief executive.³⁶ This, of course, applied most directly to foreign ministers.

Adams believed that if Washington made himself overly

accessible to foreign ministers, the dignity and stature of the presidency might be diminished in their eyes. "Neither dignity nor authority can be supported in human minds, collected into nations or any great numbers, without a splendor and majesty in some degree proportioned to them." He reminded Washington that the reception of foreign ministers was one of the most important prerogatives of the executive branch of the government. "If the state and pomp essential to this great department are not, in a good degree, preserved," according to Adams, "it will be in vain for America to hope for consideration with foreign powers."³⁷

In keeping with this and probably other advice which he received, Washington "adopted that line of conduct which combined public advantage with private convenience, and which in my judgment was unexceptionable in itself." The President firmly adopted the policy of not returning visits in his official capacity. However, he felt "compelled" to set aside one day during the week "for the reception of idle and ceremonious visits."

These visits are optional. They are made without invitation. Between the hours of three and four every Tuesday I am prepared to receive them. Gentlemen, often in great numbers, come and go as they please. A Porter shews them into the room, and they retire from it when they please, and without ceremony. At their first entrance they salute me, and I them, and as many as I can talk to I do. What pomp there is in all this, I am unable to discover.³⁸

Although the President himself was "unable to discover"

any marking of pomp and ceremony inherent in his Tuesday afternoon levees, others were consciously aware that such markings existed. Even pro-Federalist contemporaries such as Tobias Lear, the President's personal secretary, and Rufus Wilmot Griswold recognized that "pomp" was an essential ingredient of the Tuesday levees. Washington's personal appearance at these affairs, for example, was hardly in keeping with the dictates of republican simplicity. Griswold depicted the President as standing before the fire-place in the levee-room, "his hair powdered and gathered behind in a silk bag, coat and breeches of plain black velvet, white or pearl-colored vest, yellow gloves, a cocked hat in his hands, silver knee and shoe-buckles, and a long sword, with a finely wrought and glittering steel hilt, the coat worn over it, and its scabbard of polished white leather."³⁹

At three o'clock the doors of the levee-room were thrown open and the multitude of visitors would enter. As they did, Col. David Humphreys, who embodied every trait of a master of ceremonies except the actual title, introduced the caller "in a loud voice" to the President. Thereupon, the visitor and the President bowed to each other, it having been previously decided by Washington's advisers that handshaking was beneath the dignity of the occasion. After this formality was completed, Humphreys arranged the guests in a circle, much in the fashion of European diplomatie

cercles. Then, at quarter after three, the doors of the room would be closed and the President would circulate around the circle, speaking to as many of the guests as time permitted. At four o'clock the Chief Executive would resume his position in front of the fire-place, repeat the initial bowing ceremony, and thus conclude the levee.⁴⁰

Several of Washington's advisors, especially David Humphreys, undoubtedly would have preferred a more regal atmosphere. This is illustrated by an interesting anecdote passed down from Tobias Lear, through Edmund Randolph, to Thomas Jefferson:

When the President went to New York, he resisted for three weeks the efforts to introduce levees. At length he yielded, and left it to Humphreys and some others to settle the forms. Accordingly, an ante-chamber and presence room were provided, and when those who were to pay their court were assembled, the President set out, preceded by Humphreys. After passing through the ante-chamber, the door of the inner room was thrown open, and Humphreys entered first, calling out with a loud voice, 'the President of the United States.' The President was so much disconcerted with it, that he did not recover from it the whole time of the levee, and when the company was gone, he said to Humphreys, 'Well, you have taken me in once, but by God you shall never take me in a second time.'⁴¹

The fires of republican indignation fed upon instances such as this. Meticulously scrutinizing every action of the Washington administration, from the President's Tuesday afternoon levees and Mrs. Washington's Friday evening "drawing rooms", to John

Adams's apparent penchant for titles and the inordinate number of horses required by the President and Vice-President to pull their respective carriages, the nucleus of the future Democratic-Republican party, consisting of Madison, Maclay, and Jefferson, denounced what they considered affronts to the national doctrine of republican simplicity.

Senator Maclay continued his verbal barrage against what he considered "the servility of imitating English forms."⁴² He was convinced that "many people are aiming with all their force to establish a splendid court with all the pomp of majesty," and that Vice-President Adams was leading this pack of monarchical inclined sycophants.⁴³ "O Adams, Adams," Maclay bemoaned, "what a wretch art thou."⁴⁴ President Washington, according to the outspoken Pennsylvania senator, was merely a tool in the hands of "the sycophantic circle" which advised him. Moreover, "the creatures that surround him would place a crown on his head, that they may have the handling of its jewels."⁴⁵

Maclay was especially hostile to the "empty ceremony" involved in Washington's Tuesday afternoon levees. "To be clean shaved, shirted, and powdered, to make your bows with grace, and to be master of small chat on the weather, play, or newspaper anecdote of the day," Maclay asserted, were the prerequisites for attending one of the President's levees. "Indeed," the senator

continued, "from these small beginnings I fear we shall follow on nor cease till we have reached the summit of court etiquette, and all the frivolities, fopperies, and expense practiced in European governments."⁴⁶

Maclay and his Anti-Federalist cohorts in Congress were actively supported in their campaign against "vile pageantry" by the editorial harangues of Philip Freneau's National Gazette. Freneau, already famous as a poet of the revolutionary era, had been appointed to a minor State Department position by Jefferson in 1791. In addition to fulfilling his regular duties, he established a newspaper in Philadelphia, the new temporary national capital, to serve as a counter-active against John Fenno's Federalist-sponsored Gazette of the United States.

From the outset, Freneau attacked the "monarchical inclinations" of the Washington administration, warning his readers that "royalty seems determined to exhibit some tokens of pomposity in America, as long as it has an inch of ground remaining."⁴⁷ Alleging that there existed a great "ceremonial distance between the officers of the government and the people,"⁴⁸ the National Gazette further insinuated that "a new order of citizens has been created consisting only of the officers of the federal government. The privileges of this order consist in sharing exclusively in the profits of the 25,000 dollars allowed for the President's table, and in the honor of gazing upon him once a week at his levees."⁴⁹

The most damaging criticism leveled against the Federalist "court circle" came from Thomas Jefferson. In 1789 he advised Madison that "there are some among us who would now establish a monarchy. But they are inconsiderable in number and weight of character. The rising race are all republicans. We were educated in royalism: no wonder if some of us retain that idolatry still."⁵⁰ This light-hearted attitude, however, was quickly transformed when he returned from his diplomatic tour of duty in France to assume the new position of Secretary of State within the Washington administration in March 1790.

The President received me cordially, and my colleagues and the circle of principal citizens apparently with welcome. The courtesies of dinner parties given me, as a stranger newly arrived among them, placed me at once in their familiar society. But I cannot describe the wonder and mortification with which the table conversations filled me. Politics were the chief topic, and a preference of kingly over republican government was evidently the favorite sentiment. An apostate I could not be, nor yet a hypocrite; and I found myself, for the most part, the only advocate on the republican side of the question, unless among the guests there chanced to be some member of that party from the legislative Houses.⁵¹

Hamilton, for example, "was not only a monarchist," in Jefferson's estimation, "but for a monarchy bottomed on corruption," while Adams, despite the fact that he "had originally been a republican," had been affected by "the glare of royalty and nobility"

during his diplomatic mission to England, thereby making "him believe their fascination a necessary ingredient in government."⁵²

Jefferson's most explicit indictment came more than five years later. On April 24, 1796 he composed a lengthy letter to his old friend Philip Mazzei -- a letter destined to be quoted and re-quoted and one which would produce repercussions Jefferson himself never anticipated. "In place of that noble love of liberty and republican government which carried us triumphantly through the war," he informed Mazzei, "an Anglican monarchical aristocratical party has sprung up, whose avowed object is to draw over us the substance, as they have already done the forms, of the British government." Although most Americans, in Jefferson's estimation, remained true to republican principles, they were confronted with a monarchical party composed of "the Executive, the Judiciary, two out of three branches of the Legislature, all the officers of the government, all who want to be officers, all timid men who prefer the calm despotism to the boisterous sea of liberty." Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Jefferson informed his Italian friend that "it would give you a fever were I to name to you the apostates who have gone over to these heresies, men who were Samsons in the field and Solomons in the council, but who have had their heads shorn by the harlot England."⁵³

As the Mazzei letter subsequently and perhaps unfortunately for Jefferson fell into the wrong hands, the contents of it

were brought to the immediate attention of the American people. Suffering in the multiple translation from Italian to French to English, Jefferson's letter was twisted to fit the needs of the Federalist propaganda machine. In the original version, he had expressed objection to the "forms" of the British government which had been incorporated into the American system. In the translation, however, "forms" was changed to "form", thus making Jefferson seem hostile to the Constitution and therefore in an unworthy juxtaposition with Washington, who was still tremendously popular and universally respected.⁵⁴ Moreover, his reference to the "Samsons in the field . . . who have had their heads shorn by the harlot England" was interpreted by many as a direct slap against the powdered cheek of Washington. The Gazette of the United States, for example, proclaimed that Jefferson was nothing less than "the slanderer of Washington."⁵⁵

Jefferson himself remained silent about these accusations, making little or no attempt to either refute them or to defend his position. Finally, in a letter to Martin Van Buren twenty years later, Jefferson declared that the allegations and accusations had been entirely erroneous. He explained that the original letter used the word "forms", meaning "the levees, birthdays, and the pompous cavalcade to the State House on the meeting of Congress," and not the word "form" as appeared in the translation. He informed Van Buren that his reference to the "Samsons

in the field" was not intended to give the impression that Washington had succumbed to the glare of royalty and nobility. Quite to the contrary. According to Jefferson, President Washington "would never have degraded himself so far as to take to himself the imputation in that letter on the 'Samsons in combat'." Moreover, the President "was himself sincerely a friend to the republican principles of our Constitution."⁵⁶ Despite this latter denial, the message inherent in the Mazzei letter undoubtedly carried much weight in the minds of many voters during the election of 1800.

These Republican criticisms continued unabated throughout the administration of John Adams. They reached their climax with the passage in 1798 of the infamous Sedition Act, which, according to one Republican newspaper, had the effect of making presidential prerogatives resemble "the sacrosanct privileges of a monarch." The Republican press had a field-day, for example, during the farcical Luther Baldwin case. Baldwin was convicted under the Sedition Act "because he expressed a wish that a cannon shot had lodged in the president's posterior."⁵⁷ The New York Argus commented: "When we heard that Luther Baldwin was indicted for sedition, we supposed that he had been guilty of something criminal We must confess that our astonishment has been excessive on hearing the peculiarity of the

expressions for which so formal a trial was instituted." Furthermore, the Argus asked: "Can the most enthusiastic federalists or tories suppose that those who are opposed to them would feel any justification in firing at such a disgusting target as the _____ of J. A.?"⁵⁸

Modern research has convincingly demonstrated that the republican fixation upon monarchical infiltration in the national government under Washington and Adams was nothing more than a political device, a clever subterfuge used by the Democratic-Republican party to advance its interests at the expense of those of the Federalists. In reality, "each party feared that its opponent was so identified with Old World influences that it constituted a threat to American institutions."⁵⁹ The Federalists maintained that the Republicans were pro-French and dedicated agitators, intent upon establishing a radical form of government. On the other hand, the Republicans accused their Federalist adversaries of being monarchical inclined Anglophiles, intent upon the resurrection of royalty and pomposity.

This use of European designations had the effect of obscuring the real issues separating the two parties. In point of fact, according to James Morton Smith, "both the Federalist and Republican parties were antimonarchical, but they differed in their attitude toward popular government."⁶⁰ Freneau, Maclay, and

Jefferson were masters in the art of political propaganda and they accordingly used their skills to irreparably weaken the Federalist party. The Republicans recognized that the appellations of "monarchist" and "monocrat" were abusive and derisive when applied to a prominent political character, and they accordingly wielded this propaganda tool with consummate skill against Hamilton, Adams, and even Washington.⁶¹ In reality, there existed no substantial difference between Washington and Adams on the one hand and the Jeffersonians on the other with respect to republican principles.

In 1811, John Adams wrote to Benjamin Rush explaining his position on republicanism. He felt that the only differences between himself and Jefferson in this regard consisted:

1. In the difference between speeches and messages. I was a monarchist because I thought a speech more manly, more respectful to Congress and the nation. Jefferson and Rush preferred messages.
2. I held levees once a week, that all my time might not be wasted by idle visits. Jefferson's whole eight years was a levee.
3. I dined a large company once or twice a week. Jefferson dined a dozen every day.
4. Jefferson and Rush were for liberty and straight hair. I thought curled hair was republican as straight.

In these, and a few other points of equal importance, all miserable frivolities, that Jefferson and Rush ought to blush that they ever laid any stress upon them, I might differ; but I never know any points of more consequence, on which there was any variation between us.⁶²

Washington, like Adams, was more interested in imparting a sense of

respectability to the presidency than in creating a sea of protocol to wallow in. "All see, and most admire," he wrote to Catherine Graham, "the glare which hovers round the external trappings of elevated office. To me there is nothing in it, beyond the lustre which may be reflected from its connection with a power of promoting human felicity."⁶³ Even Jefferson admitted that "nobody disliked more the ceremonies of his office, and he had not the least taste or gratification in the execution of its functions."⁶⁴

American diplomatic etiquette and protocol during the administrations of Washington and Adams was a synthesis between this attitude of providing the presidency with an aura of respectability and the ideas inherent in the doctrine of republican simplicity. The French minister, the Comte de Moustier, expressed this synthesis quite succinctly when he remarked that Washington had "the advantage of uniting great dignity with great simplicity of manner."⁶⁵ Unlike the Confederation period, the era of Washington and Adams saw no formal attempt to codify or even formulate an official policy of etiquette for diplomatic personnel stationed in the United States, although the Senate did vote unanimously on October 26, 1791, that Senators "may, with propriety, pay the first visit on all Ambassadors after they shall be received by the President and announced by him to the public, in consideration of their being the Representatives of the persons

and dignities of their respective Sovereigns, and that the Senators will expect to receive the first visit from all other Ministers."⁶⁶

It was also decided during this period that foreign ministers should not have direct access to the President. The Comte de Moustier wrote to Washington on May 19, 1789, claiming the privilege of dealing directly with the chief executive. Washington, in turn, responded to this possible encroachment upon presidential "dignity" and "respectability" by informing Moustier that "there is, in most polished nations, a system established, with regard to the foreign as well as the other great Departments, which, from the utility, the necessity, and the reason of the thing, provides that business should be digested and prepared by the Heads of those departments."⁶⁷ In other words, the French minister and his colleagues in the diplomatic corps were directed to communicate their messages and pursue their business via the office of the Secretary of State, thus preserving the respectability of the presidency.

Aside from these rather formal but hardly unnecessary rules of procedure, American diplomatic etiquette and protocol under Washington and Adams conformed almost entirely to the dictates of republican simplicity. The American government refused to adopt the European practice of requiring diplomats to secure new letters of credence upon the death or resignation of the chief executive. It further refrained from recognizing an order of diplomatic precedence among

the nations of the world. In 1796, Pierre A. Adet, the new French foreign minister, wrote to the Secretary of State, Timothy Pickering, complaining that several periodical publications, including the Directory printed in Philadelphia, had listed the names of the members of the diplomatic corps in residence in the United States with the British minister preceding the French minister:

The French people look upon all people as equal and as brothers; but they will never suffer that partial distinctions, contrary to custom; should be granted directly, or indirectly, to any state whatever.

The foreign agents near your republic have hitherto been arranged in the Directory and other almanacs of the United States, in the order of rank appertaining to their respective powers.

This year the agents of Great Britain, who only enjoy the third rank, have there been placed before those of France and Spain.⁶⁸

Pickering responded to Adet's complaint by explaining that the periodicals in question were privately owned and therefore not subject to governmental regulation. More significantly, Pickering informed Adet that "the Government of the United States will not attempt, by any official arrangement, voluntarily to determine questions of rank among foreign Powers."⁶⁹

Finally, the diplomatic reception accorded to foreign ministers during this period by the President of the United States was distinctively simple when compared to European court protocol and the reception ceremonial experienced under the Confederation

government. Upon receiving a copy of the new minister's letter of credence, the Secretary of State conferred with the President and fixed the time of presentation. At the appointed time, the Secretary of State accompanied the new minister in his coach to the President's office, whereupon the minister was properly introduced. After delivering his credentials to the President, the minister generally delivered a very short speech. Upon its conclusion, the President and the new minister sat down, while the Secretary of State, who remained standing, read the letter of credence aloud. After a brief exchange of informal and generally complimentary remarks, the Secretary and the minister withdrew.⁷⁰ Testifying to the relative simplicity of American usage, Ternant, one of the many French ministers to serve in America during this period, wrote to the French foreign ministry on August 13, 1791, describing his initial audience with President Washington. "Our interview was very simple and all points marked an intimate cordiality," the French minister recorded. "It was even more simpler than I had imagined -- After having presented my letters to the President, without having to make him receive any of the compliments of usage, he seemed to put aside the formality of office and had me sit close to him. . . ."⁷¹

This synthesis of dignity on the one hand and republican simplicity on the other characterized American diplomatic etiquette and protocol throughout the regimes of Washington and Adams. Thomas

Jefferson, coming to power in 1801, would succeed in reducing this formula to an absurdity.

¹Benjamin Vaughan to Earl of Shelburne, November 8, 1782, in Adams MSS., reel 256. This is a transcript of the original letter which John Quincy Adams had copied and filed among other letters and documents relating to American political and diplomatic affairs, 1783-1831.

²Roscoe R. Hill, ed., Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789, 34 vols. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904-37), XXXI, 665-66.

³Robert Livingston to Chevalier de la Luzerne, May 12, 1782, in Wharton, Diplomatic Correspondence, V, 414.

⁴Thomas Jefferson to Comte de Moustier, May 17, 1788, in Jefferson, Papers, XIII, 173-76.

⁵N. A. MSS., Papers of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789, reel 32 ("Reports of Committees on Foreign Affairs, 1776-1788," II, 227 ff.); "Congress-Secret Journals" (June 12, 1783), in Wharton, Diplomatic Correspondence, VI, 481; "Ceremonial of admitting the French minister to Congress" (June 20, 1778), in Ibid., II, 653-56; and Boudinat to Van Berckel, October 25, 1783, in Ibid., VI, 715-16.

⁶Moustier to Montmorin, February 12, 1788, and Montmorin to Moustier, June 23, 1788, in Comte de Moustier, "Correspondence of the Comte de Moustier with the Comte de Montmorin, 1787-1789," in American Historical Review, VIII, No. 4 (July 1903), 722-727.

⁷William Maclay, The Journal of William Maclay, United States Senator from Pennsylvania, 1789-1791, ed. Charles A. Beard (New York: Boni, 1927), 3 and 6.

⁸Ibid., 2, 3, and 7.

⁹Ibid., 1.

¹⁰Ibid., 1 and 24.

¹¹John Adams to A Recluse Man, January 19, 1792, in Adams, Works, VIII, 513.

¹²James Madison to Edmund Randolph, May 10, 1789, in James Madison, Letters and Other Writings of James Madison, Fourth President of the United States, Published by Order of Congress, 4 vols. (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1865-67), I, 469.

¹³Maclay, Journal, 23.

¹⁴Gerald Carson, The Polite Americans: A Wide-Angle View of Our More or Less Good Manners over 300 Years (New York: Morrow, 1966), 73.

¹⁵Maclay, Journal, 26.

¹⁶Ibid., 21.

¹⁷Irving Brant, The Life of James Madison, 6 vols. (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1941-61), III, 256-57.

¹⁸Maclay, Journal, 25.

¹⁹Annals of Congress, I, 320-21. See also James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, May 9, 1789, in Madison, Letters, I, 467, and Jefferson to Madison, July 29, 1789, in Jefferson, Papers, XX, 315-16. Jefferson's attitude, of course, echoed Madison's. He wrote from Paris that "the President's title as proposed by the senate was the most superlatively ridiculous thing I ever heard of."

²⁰John Adams to Robert Livingston, April 23, 1782, in Adams, Works, VII, 573-74.

²¹Ibid., and "Diary," in Adams Papers (series I), III, 118.

²²Maclay, Journal, 339. See also Edwin Harrison Cady, The Gentleman in America: A Literary Study in American Culture (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1949), 70-72.

²³John Adams to Benjamin Rush, July 5, 1789, in John Adams, Letterbook, 20 May 1789 - 7 January 1793, Adams MSS., reel 115.

²⁴Ibid., June 9, 1789.

²⁵Ibid., July 24, 1789. Italics mine.

²⁶ Frank Monaghan, Notes on the Inaugural Journey and the Inaugural Ceremonies of George Washington as First President of the United States (prepared for private distribution, 1939, typescript in Library of Congress), 44-48.

²⁷ George Washington to David Stuart, June 15, 1790, in George Washington, The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799, 39 vols., ed. John C. Fitzpatrick (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1940-44), XXXI, 53.

²⁸ Douglas Southall Freeman, George Washington: A Biography, 7 vols. (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1948-57), VI, 186.

²⁹ Washington, Writings, XXX, 319-20. There is some confusion as to exactly when Washington spoke to the members of his administration in regard to this matter. The "Queries" were written on May 10, whereas Hamilton's letter of response is dated May 5 and Adams's on May 17. Moreover, there is reason to believe that similar rules had been in effect much sooner than any of these dates would indicate. On May 2, the Gazette of the United States announced that "the President has assigned every Tuesday and Friday, between the hours of 2 and 3 for receiving visits; and that visits of compliment on other days, and particularly on Saturday, will not be agreeable to him. It seems to be a prevailing opinion that so much of the President's time will be engaged by the various and important business imposed upon by the Constitution that he will find himself constrained to omit returning visits, or accepting invitations to entertainments."

³⁰ Freeman, Washington, VI, 202.

³¹ Maclay, Journal, 15, and John Adams to George Washington, May 17, 1789, in Adams, Works, VIII, 491.

³² Freeman, Washington, VI, 202.

³³ John Adams to George Washington, May 17, 1789, in Adams, Works, VIII, 492.

³⁴ Alexander Hamilton to George Washington, May 5, 1789, in Alexander Hamilton, The Papers of Alexander Hamilton, 9 vols. to date, ed. Harold E. Syrett (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961-67), V, 336.

³⁵John Adams to Washington, May 17, 1789, in Adams, Works, VIII, 492.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid., 493. Italics mine.

³⁸George Washington to David Stuart, June 15, 1790, in Washington, Writings, XXXI, 53-55.

³⁹Rufus Wilmot Griswold, The Republican Court or American Society in the Days of Washington (New York: Appelton, 1854), 269-70.

⁴⁰Ibid., and Stephen Decatur, Jr., ed., Private Affairs of George Washington from the Records and Accounts of Tobias Lear, Esquire, his Secretary (Boston: Riverside Press, 1933), 74.

⁴¹"The Anas," in Thomas Jefferson, The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, 20 vols., ed. Andrew A. Lipscomb and Albert E. Bergh (Washington: Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, 1903), I, 333-34.

⁴²Maclay, Journal, 183.

⁴³Ibid., 80.

⁴⁴Ibid., 151.

⁴⁵Ibid., 119-20 and 172.

⁴⁶Ibid., 67.

⁴⁷National Gazette (Philadelphia), January 30, 1793, 3.

⁴⁸Ibid., December 12, 1792, 2.

⁴⁹Ibid., January 30, 1793, 3.

⁵⁰Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, March 15, 1789, in Jefferson, Papers, XIV, 616.

⁵¹"The Anas," in Jefferson, Writings, I, 270-71.

⁵²Ibid., 278-80.

⁵³Thomas Jefferson to Philip Mazzei, April 24, 1796, in Ibid., IX, 335.

⁵⁴Brant, Madison, III, 454.

⁵⁵Gazette of the United States (New York), April 6, 1804, 1.

⁵⁶Thomas Jefferson to Martin Van Buren, June 29, 1824, in Jefferson, Writings, XIX, 56 and 66.

⁵⁷Cited in James Morton Smith, Freedom's Fetters: The Alien and Sedition Laws and American Civil Liberties (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1956), 272 and 270.

⁵⁸Ibid., 272-74.

⁵⁹Ibid., 12.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹John C. Miller, Alexander Hamilton: Portrait in Paradox (New York: Harper and Row, 1959), 318.

⁶²John Adams to Benjamin Rush, December 25, 1811, in Adams, Works, X, 11.

⁶³George Washington to Catherine M. Graham, January 9, 1790, in Washington, Writings, XXX, 496.

⁶⁴"The Anas," in Jefferson, Writings, I, 315.

⁶⁵Cited in Decatur, Private Affairs, 7.

⁶⁶Cited in editorial note, Washington, Writings, XXXI, 405n.

⁶⁷George Washington to Comte de Moustier, May 25, 1789, in Ibid., XXX, 334.

⁶⁸Pierre A. Adet to Timothy Pickering, March 3, 1796, in American State Papers, Documents, Legislative and Executive of the Congress of the United States: Foreign Relations, 1789-1828, 6 vols. (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1832-59), I, 657.

⁶⁹ Timothy Pickering to Pierre A. Adet, March 14, 1796, in Ibid., 657-58.

⁷⁰ Graham Henry Stuart, American Diplomatic and Consular Practice (New York: Appleton, 1936), 161, and John Bassett Moore, A Digest of International Law, 8 vols. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1906), IV, 465.

⁷¹ M. Ternant to Comte de Montmorin, August 13, 1791, in Frederick Jackson Turner, ed., Correspondence of the French Ministers to the United States, 1791-1797, American Historical Association, Annual Report, 1903, II (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), 43-44.

CHAPTER THREE

PELL-MELL

During the presidential campaign of 1800, the Federalists warned the nation that a Jeffersonian victory would bring in its train an American equivalent to the French Reign of Terror. Taking advantage of Jefferson's avowed sympathy for the revolution in France and his alleged infidelity and atheism, the Federalists painted an awesome picture of "dwellings in flames, hoary hairs bathed in blood, female chastity violated . . . children writhing on the pike and halberd."¹ New England clergymen, imbued with Federalist principles and outraged at the prospect of a free-thinker in the White House, beseeched their flocks not to support this "howling atheist" and "confirmed infidel." Adding fuel to the fire, the New England Palladium warned professing Christians that "our churches will be prostrated, and some infamous prostitute, under the title of the Goddess of Reason, will preside in the Sanctuaries now devoted to the worship of the Most High."²

When Jefferson was at last elected, most Federalists, resigned to their fate, prepared for the worst. The more bitter of their lot, according to Nathan Schachner, foresaw "the end of the world, the subversion of orderly government and the trampling of the breechless mob through the streets of cities; while their even more

embittered adherents among the New England clergy prophesied the reign of Antichrist and the death of all religion."³

Jefferson himself was partially to blame for the uneasy speculation which preceded his inauguration. His letter to Mazzei, for example, was taken to imply that the new President was dissatisfied with the American constitution and would, as a matter of course, promptly set out to alter it. The fact that he lifted not a finger to explain the original intent of the letter confirmed them in their fears. Moreover, Jefferson was, at least from a philosophical and theoretical standpoint, favorable to the idea of revolution. Believing that revolutions were a form of "medicine necessary for the sound health of government," Jefferson wrote to Madison in 1789 explaining that "a little rebellion now and then is a good thing, and as necessary in the political world as storms in the physical."⁴ Finally, Jefferson probably would have been the last to admit that his victory in 1800 was not revolutionary. Indeed, even in his later years, the sage of Monticello proudly reminisced about his so-called "Revolution of 1800."

Notwithstanding the pounding hearts and trembling knees of the Federalists, as well as Jefferson's own feelings concerning the matter, the Revolution of 1800 was hardly revolutionary. Where Jeffersonian republicanism departed from the Federalist tradition, the difference was often largely a matter of style and emphasis.

Moreover, this "difference" was motivated almost entirely by political considerations. Throughout the administrations of Washington and Adams, not to mention the mudslinging melee of 1800, the Republicans had ranted and raved as to what they considered affronts to republican simplicity. A Pennsylvania radical had snorted during the campaign of 1800, for example, "Etiquette! Confound the word, it ought not to be admitted into an American dictionary. Ought we to follow the fashions and follies of old corrupt courts? Are we not a young Republic? And ought we not be plain and honest, and to disdain all their craft, pageantry and grimace? It is . . . to be hoped, that the next President will discontinue ridiculous levees, squaring the heel and toe and bowing like a country dancing master . . . aping old worthless sovereigns and courtiers and all . . . for the sake of etiquette. Mr. Jefferson, should he be our next President, will doubtless trample under foot these baubles He is elevated far above the nonsense of parade -- mere adulation and asiatic servility are not to his taste."⁵ Once elected, Jefferson could hardly turn his back upon nearly a decade of Anti-Federalist propaganda. He therefore pushed the doctrine of republican simplicity to its logical extreme -- complete absurdity -- in a system of etiquette and protocol which he laconically dubbed "pell-mell."

As president-elect he did away with several of the niceties

which had characterized the inaugurations of his two predecessors. On March 4, 1801, a parade of artillery and riflemen appeared before Jefferson's lodgings at Conrad's boarding-house, accompanied by a salvo of guns and cannon. Thereupon, at twelve-noon, the lofty Virginian emerged from the dwelling. The manner of his dress and appearance, according to the sympathetic National Intelligencer, "was, as usual, that of a plain citizen, without any distinctive badge of office."⁶ Spurning the pomp and formality of the state carriage with its six horses and outriders, Jefferson walked on foot in the company of several Republican colleagues and "an anonymous following of citizenry," from Conrad's to the Capitol, where he delivered his inaugural address in a low-pitched, inaudible voice, to a joint-session of Congress.⁷

Immediately after the inaugural ceremonies had been completed, the new President returned on foot to Conrad's boarding-house, where "he lived on a perfect equality with his fellow boarders, and ate at a common table."⁸ During his stint as Vice-President in the Adams administration, Jefferson and his democratic friends had soundly rejected attempts to establish a seating arrangement at the common table based upon rank. One observer remarked that the wife of John Brown, the Senator from Kentucky, had suggested that a seat should be provided for

Jefferson at the upper end of the table, near the fire, "if not on account of his rank as vice-President, at least as the oldest man in company." But this offer was politely refused, "and he occupied during the whole winter the lowest and coldest seat at a long table at which a company of more than thirty sat down." Mrs. Brown, however, was determined that Jefferson be accorded his due respect. On the evening of March 4, seeing that none of the gentlemen sitting at the table felt pre-disposed to relinquish his seat to the new President, Mrs. Brown rose and offered her place. Jefferson "smilingly declined it, and took his usual place at the bottom of the table." Mrs. Brown, her feathers a bit ruffled, was reported to have "felt indignant and for a moment almost hated the leveling principle of democracy, though her husband was a zealous democrat."⁹ Even Margaret Bayard Smith, the wife of Samuel Harrison Smith, the Republican editor of the National Intelligencer, remarked that "this was carrying equality rather too far; there is no incompatibility between politeness and republicanism; grace cannot weaken and rudeness cannot strengthen a good cause, but democracy is more jealous of power and privilege than even despotism."¹⁰

If these actions were not enough to shock Federalist sensibilities, Jefferson immediately initiated the presidential practice of shaking hands instead of bowing, as his predecessors had done.¹¹

Moreover, the new President created something of a sensation by the ungentlemanly habit of riding horseback alone. Federalist critics were quick to pounce upon the President's riding habits as being detrimental to the "respectability" of the presidency. Chief among these critics was the newly elected Senator from New Hampshire, William Plumer, whose daily Memorandum gives valuable, if somewhat biased, accounts of Jeffersonian manners. Plumer was mortified to learn that Jefferson generally rode his horse unattended by a groom or servant. "I do not know the cause of this singularity," Plumer remarked, "for gentlemen of rank & consequence here are usually attended when they ride, by their servants -- It may proceed from affectation -- & it may arise from other causes. The appearance ill accords with the dignity of the chief of a great nation."¹²

The New Hampshire Senator was further disturbed by the manner in which Jefferson invited guests to dine with him at the White House. Presidents Washington and Adams had sent cards of invitation issued in the name of The President of the United States, whereas the new President issued his by using his own name. "The following is the form established by Mr. Jefferson -- Th: Jefferson requests the favor of Mr. Plumer to dine with him on Monday next at half after three, or at whatever later hour the house may rise." Plumer later discovered

that Jefferson addressed his cards in this fashion because he "meant it should be considered more as the invitation of a private gentleman, than of that of the President."¹³

When Plumer finally met Jefferson in person he expressed surprise and disgust at the undignified manner in which the President presented himself. Accompanied to the White House by General Varnum, a Republican acquaintance from Massachusetts, Plumer described his meeting with Jefferson in a letter to Jeremiah Smith: "In a few moments, a tall highboned man came into the room; he was drest, or rather undrest, with an old brown coat, read waistcoat, old corduroy small clothes, much soiled -- woolen hose -- & slippers without heels. I thought this man was a servant, but Genl. Varnum suprised me, by announcing that it was the President. Never, never rally me again upon my inattention to dress -- I certainly dress as well as the first officer of the nation."¹⁴

Hoping to suppress "all those public forms and ceremonies which tended to familiarize the public eye to the harbingers of another form of government," Jefferson next abolished the weekly presidential levees, which had figured so prominently in Washington social life during the administrations of his two predecessors.¹⁵ This action was greeted with indignation on the part of those who relished the weekly visitations to the presidential

mansion. The disquiet provoked by Jefferson's suppression of levee-day had the effect of deterring the President from infringing any further upon the "rights" of the people: he therefore retained the established custom of throwing open the doors of the White House to the general public twice a year, on New Year's Day and on July 4.¹⁶

This concession was insufficient in the eyes of many Washington socialites, and they persisted in their efforts to persuade Jefferson to re-establish the cherished levees. On one occasion, a group of ladies and gentlemen arrived en masse at the White House at the time the regular levees had been held under Washington and Adams. Much to their dismay, Jefferson was out horseback riding. Persisting in their determination, they decided to wait until the chief executive returned, hoping thereby to convince him as to the advisability of re-opening the levees. "When he returned at three o'clock, and learned that the great rooms were filled with company waiting to see him, he guessed their object, and frustrated it gracefully, and with perfect good humor, by merely going among them, all accoutred as he was, booted, spurred, splashed with mud, riding whip in hand, and greeted them as though the conjunction of so many guests were merely a joyous coincidence."¹⁷ Jefferson thus

succeeded in transforming a potential public levee into a coincidental private meeting between himself and a group of citizens who just happened to be passing by.

Abolishing the presidential levees did indeed have a positive effect. Much to the dismay of foreign diplomats and Washington socialites, who thrived on such punctilious affairs, Jefferson's action decreased the formality and idle ceremony which, according to the Republicans, had characterized the preceding administrations. On the other hand, the President's decision had a negative effect -- one hardly anticipated by the chief executive. With the abolition of levees and the adoption of informality as a basis for social intercourse, the President soon found (as Washington had found a decade earlier) that much of his valuable time was being pre-empted by "coincidental" gatherings such as the one described above. Citizens began coming and going as they saw fit, while foreign ministers and other dignitaries began popping in unexpectedly at the White House demanding to see the President. Despite the consequent drain on his time, however, Jefferson remained undaunted and stood steadfast in his determination to resist levees. Moreover, this was only the opening skirmish in the President's full-scale offensive against etiquette and protocol. He next turned his sights upon the diplomatic corps, hoping to strip diplomatic etiquette and protocol of its legendary formality and punctiliousness.

In November 1803, Jefferson formulated his "Canons of Etiquette," which were directed primarily, though not exclusively, at the diplomatic corps. "In order to bring the members of society together in the first instance," the President began, "the custom of the country has established that residents shall pay the first visit to strangers, and, among strangers, first comers to later comers, foreign and domestic; the character of stranger ceasing after the first visits." There was one notable exception to this rule, however, and this was that foreign ministers, "from the necessity of making themselves known, pay the first visit to the ministers of the nation, which is returned." If this requirement annoyed foreign ministers, Jefferson's second decree infuriated them: "When brought together in society, all are perfectly equal, whether foreign or domestic, titled or untitled, in or out of office."

The remaining rules were, as Jefferson explained, merely "exemplifications of these two principles." To compensate the members of the diplomatic corps, who were expected to make the first visit to cabinet members, Jefferson decreed that the "families of foreign ministers, arriving at the seat of the government, receive the first visit from those of the national ministers, as from all other residents." Yet this "compensation" was nothing more than a few crumbs thrown to the diplomatic corps, as the remaining "canons

of etiquette" were distinctly unfavorable to foreign ministers accustomed to European court customs. In the first place, titles were not to be recognized in the transaction of diplomatic business or as a basis of creating social distinctions. Secondly, "differences of grade among diplomatic members, gives no precedence." In other words, Jefferson was maintaining that a minister plenipotentiary, for example, was entitled to no more or no less attention, socially or officially, than that accorded to a chargé d'affaires.

"At public ceremonies, to which the government invites the presence of foreign ministers and their families," the President continued, "a convenient seat or station will be provided for them, with any other strangers invited and the families of the national ministers, each taking place as they arrive, and without any precedence." Finally, and perhaps most significantly, Jefferson directed that "to maintain the principle of equality, or of pêle mêle, and prevent the growth of precedence out of courtesy, the members of the Executive will practice at their own houses, and recommend an adherence to the ancient usage of the country, of gentlemen in mass giving precedence to ladies in mass, in passing from one apartment where they are assembled into another."¹⁸

Although Jefferson's "canons of etiquette" seemed harmless enough, little did the President realize that he had just composed the libretto for nineteenth century America's most farcical

comic opera. Moreover, while Jefferson was formulating his rules of pell-mell, the British Foreign Office conveniently, though obviously unwittingly, provided the President with a male lead for his opera-bouffe in the person of Anthony Merry, who had recently been chosen to fill the vacant British ministerial position in Washington.

Merry's predecessor in America was Robert Liston. Liston was recalled on November 28, 1800, and from this time until late in 1803, British affairs in America were managed by Edward Thornton in the capacity of chargé d'affaires.¹⁹ Finally, in 1803, the Foreign Office began considering candidates to fill Liston's vacated position. According to Henry Adams, the final decision as to who would receive the coveted position was made by Rufus King, the American minister at the Court of St. James. Apparently the Foreign Office, in a conciliatory gesture, suggested to King the names of two possible choices -- Francis James Jackson and Anthony Merry. King, in turn, expressed his preference for the latter.²⁰ "As I have had the opportunity of knowing both these gentlemen during my residence here," King later wrote to Secretary of State Madison, "it was not without some regret that I heard of the intention to appoint Mr. Jackson in lieu of Mr. Merry. Mr. Jackson is said to be positive, vain, and intolerant. He is moreover filled with English prejudices in respect to all other countries" In short,

King let it be known that the appointment of Jackson would be undesirable and not in the interests of amiable relations between the two countries. "On the other hand," King continued, "Mr. Merry appears to be a plain, unassuming, and amiable man, who having lived for many years in Spain is in almost every point of character the reverse of Mr. Jackson" Perhaps most importantly, concluded the American minister, "Mr. Merry wishes for the mission with the view of obtaining what he believes will prove to be an agreeable and permanent residence."²¹

In view of later developments -- developments which seemed to contradict the expectations of the American minister -- it might reasonably be alleged that Rufus King was a poor judge of character. But this was hardly the case. Anthony Merry was indeed "a plain, unassuming, and amiable man" -- providing, however, he remained within his milieu. Once out of it, he became as "positive, vain, and intolerant" as King feared Francis James Jackson would have been. Moreover, King was not alone in his praise of and confidence in the new minister. Madison maintained that Merry "appears to be an amiable man in private society, and a candid and agreeable one in public business,"²² while Jefferson himself confessed that the Englishman was "personally as desirable a character as could have been sent us."²³

For his part, Anthony Merry came to the United States

with good intentions. He was indeed looking for a residence which would be both "agreeable and permanent" and he believed that the United States was the answer to his quest. The new minister's knowledge of American conditions, however, proved to be extremely limited. His chief source of information had been ex-minister Liston, who had made his residence at Philadelphia, the temporary capital and perhaps the most cosmopolitan city in North America, and who had departed long before Jefferson's pell-mell system of etiquette had been initiated.²⁴

Arriving in Washington on November 6, 1803, Mr. and Mrs. Anthony Merry quickly discovered that the national capital was far from being a cosmopolitan urban center.²⁵ In point of fact, it was hardly even a city. One visitor remarked that Washington was "nothing more than distinct groups of houses, scattered over a vast surface, and has more the appearance of so many villages, than a city,"²⁶ while another complained that "in the neighbourhood of the capitol particularly, where you may look in vain for fresh meat at the single houses of farmers along the road side, or for wine or beer, and think yourself lucky if you can get some indifferent whisky to qualify the bad taste of the water."²⁷ Even Gouverneur Morris, recently returned from France and filling out an unexpired term in the Senate, sarcastically noted that "we want nothing here but houses, cellars, kitchens, well-informed

men, amiable women, and other little trifles of the kind to make our city perfect" ²⁸ One French diplomat, upon discovering that he was expected to live in this material and cultural wasteland, exclaimed: "My God! What have I done, to be condemned to reside in such a city?" ²⁹

In one of his first despatches to the Foreign Office, Merry bitterly related the inconveniences which he had encountered upon arriving in Washington. "I cannot describe to you the difficulty and expense which I have to encounter in fixing myself in a habitation," he wrote to George Hammond. "By dint of money I have just secured two small houses on the common which is meant to become in time the city of Washington. They are mere shells of houses, with bare walls and without fixtures of any kind, even without a pump or well, all which I must provide at my own cost." If this were not enough to dismay the new minister, there was also the remoteness of Washington to consider: "Provisions of any kind, especially vegetables, are frequently hardly to be obtained at any price." In fact, Merry concluded, "everything . . . in the federal City is . . . perfectly savage." ³⁰

The British minister's wife appears to have been an aggressive, overbearing woman, intent upon being treated with all those civilities and enjoying all those conveniences commonly associated with English women of her station. Margaret Bayard

Smith, whose notebook provides one of the best guides to the social and intellectual history of Jeffersonian America, observed that Mrs. Merry was "a large, tall, well-made woman, rather masculine, very free and affable in her manners, but easy without being graceful." Mrs. Smith further observed that she was "a woman of fine understanding and she is so entirely the talker and actor in all companies, that her good husband passes quite unnoticed."³¹ Merry's diminutive stature aside that of his domineering wife was noticed by Senator Plumer, who concluded that he was "a feeble inefficient man,"³² and even by Jefferson, who observed that it was Merry's misfortune to be "unluckily associated with one of an opposite character in every point."³³ Viewing with dismay the inconveniences of the national capital, Mrs. Merry lamented that "this is a thousand times worse than the worse parts of Spain."³⁴

When the Merrys landed at Norfolk harbor on November 4 and began their northward journey to the federal city, the diplomatic corps in America was hardly what one could call impressive. It merely consisted of four individuals -- the Marques de Yrujo, envoy extraordinary of Spain, Edward Thornton, chargé d'affaires of Great Britain, Louis A. Pichon, chargé d'affaires of France, and Peter Pederson, chargé d'affaires of Denmark -- only one of whom (Yrujo) had a full ministerial rank and powers.³⁵

Although schooled in Old World diplomacy, Yrujo had been

Americanized somewhat by his marriage to Sally McKean, the lovely daughter of Republican Governor Thomas McKean of Pennsylvania. Moreover, his "intimate relations at the White House had given him family privileges," and he therefore tended to quietly conform to Jefferson's canons of etiquette.³⁶ According to Henry Adams, however, Yrujo resented Jefferson's code of pell-mell intensely and demonstrated these sentiments by "living mostly in Philadelphia disregarding the want of what he considered good manners at Washington, according to which he was placed on the same social footing with his own secretary of legation."³⁷

The remaining members of the diplomatic quartet -- Thornton, Pichon, and Pederson -- were less disturbed by Jeffersonian etiquette than was their colleague from Spain. In fact, they probably were quite enthusiastic about a system which accorded them more social recognition and mobility than they would have been entitled to in the precedence-encrusted courts of Europe. The rank of *chargé d'affaires* in the early nineteenth century was distinctly an inferior and subordinant position, especially in the eyes of those rank-conscious courtiers and diplomats who fashioned the Old World handbook of diplomatic etiquette and protocol. In Russia, for example, the royal family refused to even speak to *chargés d'affaires*,³⁸ while in France, as William Short discovered, *chargés d'affaires* were not accorded the privilege of an official audience upon taking leave.³⁹

But in Jeffersonian America it was quite different. *Chargés d'affaires* distinctly benefited from the liberal official etiquette, being able thereby to mingle pell-mell with their superiors.

Merry's first official act upon reaching Washington was to notify Secretary of State Madison of his arrival and to make the necessary arrangements with him for the presentation of his credentials to the President. Madison, giving the new minister no hint that the ceremony would differ from standard European court procedure, arranged for an audience with Jefferson on November 29.⁴⁰ On the appointed day, Merry, dressed in his finest and fullest diplomatic attire, called upon Madison, who escorted him to the White House. Upon being presented to the President, Merry expressed silent mortification, as he later recalled, at the manner in which Jefferson was dressed to receive the distinguished minister of His Majesty George III. Blushing at the President's state of slippered undress, Merry later reported to the Foreign Office that the chief executive "received me in his usual Morning Attire, contrary to the Ceremony observed by his Predecessors."⁴¹ Aside from this irritating point of difference, the remainder of the interview seemed to be agreeable to Merry, although he did express some surprise (but not indignation) at the relative simplicity and brevity with which it was conducted. "At the Audience," he wrote Lord Hawkesbury, "Nobody was present but Mr. Madison,

who retired immediately after I had accompanied the Delivery of my Credentials with a short Speech . . . and after Mr. Jefferson had made a Reply to it This ceremony, which the President rendered as short as possible, being concluded, he desired me to sit down, when we conversed for some time upon general Affairs."⁴²

Soon after the audience, Merry appealed to Secretary of State Madison for some explanation as to why Jefferson was dressed so "shabbily" during the official interview. Madison informed the bewildered British minister that "the President did not observe those distinctions of dress, more than others in this country, and that he had received a Danish minister [Pederson] . . . in the same plain manner." This explanation hardly satisfied Merry, for he quickly pointed out that Pederson, the Danish chargé d'affaires, was only of the third rank, while he, being a minister plenipoten- tiary, was of the second rank -- therefore entitled to additional con- sideration. Madison, in turn, reminded Merry that Jeffersonian eti- quette did not recognize distinctions of diplomatic rank or precedence and that all diplomatic personnel stationed in the United States, at least in the eyes of the administration, were placed upon an equal social and official footing.⁴³

Finding little comfort or satisfaction in Madison's explana- tions, Merry was further appalled when he learned that he was ex- pected to pay the first visit to the members of Jefferson's cabinet.

Although this feature of Jeffersonian etiquette was common throughout western Europe, including in his native Great Britain, Merry had been previously informed by Liston that American usage provided that the cabinet members, not the foreign ministers, were to assume the initiative and pay the first call. In this regard, he resented what he obviously considered a personal affront:

Mr. Liston had furnished me with a particular Account in Writing of all the Rules of Distinction which had been observed towards him and Mrs. Liston. They consisted in his receiving the first Visit from every Person, except the President and Vice-President, the Members of the Senate and the Secretary for foreign Affairs

Now, for the first Time, Mr. Jefferson has required that I should make the first Visit to the Heads (as they are termed here) of all the other Departments as well as that of State⁴⁴

Merry once again appealed to Madison, only to discover that the visiting requirement was an integral part of Jefferson's canons of etiquette. The Secretary of State subsequently wrote to James Monroe, who at that time was the American minister at the Court of St. James, explaining what had occurred: " . . . the custom here as in England and elsewhere, was for the foreign minister, on his arrival, to pay the first visit to the Heads of Department. Mr. Merry had understood the custom to have been different, at least as it related to his predecessor The explanation

given, and the appeal to the practice in his own country reclaimed him from this pretension."⁴⁵ The perplexed minister really had no alternative but to acquiesce to the Jeffersonian rule, for to have done otherwise might have placed him in a state of social isolation. Sir Augustus John Foster, British Secretary of Legation under Merry, later confessed that "in such a desolate spot as Washington there was no choice but to submit unless one was to live quite in solitude especially during the recess."⁴⁶

To make matters worse, Merry then learned that the Senate had recently voted overwhelmingly in favor of a resolution which denied congressional privileges to foreign ministers. During the administrations of Washington and Adams, diplomats had been accorded the privilege (if they so desired) of occupying designated seats on the right side of the podium in both houses. Owing "to some indiscretion of Yrujo in the House of Representatives," Vice-President Aaron Burr later told Merry, it was decided to withdraw this privilege from the diplomatic corps en masse.⁴⁷ Although this action obviously was not meant as a personal affront to Merry, the British minister chose to regard it as such, listing it high on the list of those grievances which he reported to the Foreign Office on December 31.⁴⁸

Suspecting that Jefferson's object was to place foreign

ministers "on a Level with the lowest American Citizen," Merry nonetheless cordially accepted an invitation to dine with the President at the White House on December 2.⁴⁹ What Merry did not know was that Jefferson had invited several other guests to attend this presidential fete -- the Madisons, the Yrujos, and, perhaps most significantly, the Pichons. Believing that this affair was a private gathering, intended to honor his wife and himself, Merry was evidently surprised to discover this assemblage when he and Mrs. Merry arrived at the presidential mansion on the appointed day. The presence of the Pichons especially distressed and visibly irritated the British minister. When two nations were at war, neutral governments generally avoided inviting the representative of one belligerent to meet the representative of the other, unless the occasion was a formal gathering of the entire diplomatic corps.⁵⁰ As England and France were at war, the presence of Pichon at the dinner was interpreted by Merry as a calculated insult -- not only to himself but also to Great Britain.⁵¹ When he approached Madison once again for an explanation, the Secretary of State responded by indicating that the dinner was not a private affair, but rather an official diplomatic gathering. Merry remonstrated, pointing out that the Danish chargé d'affaires, Pederson, was not in attendance and therefore the dinner was by its very nature private. In this regard, he informed Madison, "the presence of a hostile character was

justly objectionable." Madison endeavored to point out that Pederson had not been invited because "he had dined with the President two days before, and having no family was the more likely to be left out of a party made up for the most part of husbands and their wives," and therefore the present assemblage was of a diplomatic or official nature, not private as Merry had supposed.⁵²

Upon the announcement that dinner was being served, Jefferson further alienated the British minister by offering his arm to Dolly Madison, thereby leaving an astonished Mrs. Merry standing in the lurch. The President proceeded to seat Mrs. Madison on his right, while Sally McKean Yrujo occupied the seat on his left. "Mrs. Merry was placed by Mr. Madison below the Spanish minister," Merry reported to the Foreign Office. "With respect to me," he added, "I was proceeding to place myself (though without Invitation) next to the Wife of the Spanish Minister, when a Member of the House of Representatives passed quickly by me and took the Seat without Mr. Jefferson's using any Means to prevent it, or taking any Care how I might be otherwise placed." Merry finally found a seat at the lower end of the table -- far removed from the center of attraction and the seats of distinction which he apparently coveted.⁵³

Shortly after this embarrassing episode, the Merrys accepted an invitation to dine at the Secretary of State's home on

December 6. It is most probable that they accepted this invitation under the impression that Madison had found the events at the White House disagreeable and that he would try to rectify the matter by according them those privileges and courtesies befitting their station in his own home. The English minister apparently had been informed by Yrujo that the Secretary of State invariably yielded precedence to foreign ministers, despite Jefferson's canons of etiquette. (Yrujo had written to his government observing that "my wife and I had enjoyed in the houses of Cabinet ministers the precedence of which we had been deprived in the President's house.")⁵⁴

But Madison, on this occasion, had other plans. He had no choice, he later told Monroe, than to follow the example set by Jefferson -- an example, he explained, which "could not with propriety be violated."⁵⁵ When the guests -- which included the Merrys, the Yrujos, the Pichons, and the other cabinet members and their wives -- assembled in the room adjoining the dining hall, therefore, Madison casually offered his arm to Mrs. Gallatin, the wife of Jefferson's Secretary of the Treasury, and proceeded to lead her to the honored position on his right. "This unexpected conduct," Yrujo reported to his government, "produced at first some confusion, during which the wife of the British minister was left without any one giving her his hand, until her

husband advanced, with visible indignation, and himself took her to the table."⁵⁶ Even the amiable Pichon remarked that Madison's actions were unusual and constituted a profound innovation from previous procedure: "There is no doubt that Mr. Madison in this instance wished to establish in his house the same formality as at the President's, in order to make Mr. Merry feel more keenly the scandal he had made; but this incident increased it."⁵⁷

In a stinging message to the Foreign Office, the British minister bitterly alleged that these actions were provoked "evidently from Design, and not from Ignorance and Awkwardness (though God knows a Great Deal of both as to Matters even of common Etiquette is to be seen at every Step in this Part of the Country)" He then related the embarrassing circumstances of the Madison fete:

I experienced the same Want of any Kind of Distinction in a still stronger Degree from the Subordinacy of Mr. Madison's Situation compared with that of the President, for on this Occasion also the Pas and the Preference in every Respect was taken by, and given to, the Wives of the Secretaries of the Departments (a Set of Beings as little without the Manners as without the Appearance of Gentlewomen), the Foreign Ministers and their Wives being left to care of Themselves.

In short, the Latter are now placed here in a Situation so degrading to the Countries they represent, and so personally disagreeable to Themselves, as to have become almost intolerable. The case Yesterday was so marked

and so irritating that I determined to hand Mrs. Merry myself to the Table, and to place Ourselves wherever we might conveniently find Seats.⁵⁸

Thereafter, the Merrys decided to "put themselves in coventry," according to Jefferson, and to thereby avoid attending official gatherings which might again infringe upon their honor and precedence. Writing to Hawkesbury, Merry explained that "I have thought it advisable to avoid all occasions where I and my wife might be exposed to a repetition of the same want of distinction toward us until I shall have received authority from you to acquiesce in it, by a signification of his Majesty's pleasure to that effect."⁵⁹

Not only did the Merrys succeed in withdrawing from official Washington society; they also managed to persuade the Yrujos into following their example. Yrujo himself had never been an enthusiastic admirer of Jeffersonian etiquette. Hoping to remain in the good graces of the President, however, the Spanish minister had submitted to pell-mell. But the recent affront to the entire diplomatic corps at Madison's, coupled with the acquisition of the Louisiana territory and the mounting determination of the United States to acquire the Floridas as well, actions and motives bitterly denounced by the Spanish government, had the effect of uniting Yrujo and Merry in a common bond. Yrujo's deflection, according

to Madison, was "not a little awkward, having acquiesced for nearly three years in the practice against which he now revolts."⁶⁰ A furious social war, affecting all of Washington society, quickly ensued.

The initiative was largely assumed by the wives of the two ministers. Mrs. Merry took advantage of Jefferson's ban on levees to institute her own weekly drawing rooms, "with dancing and cards for the frivolous, and the honor of her conversation for those who could appreciate it."⁶¹ More significantly, it was decided that whenever the Merrys or Yrujos gave dinner parties, the ministers would lead their own wives to the table, thereby letting the wives of cabinet members fend for themselves in the scramble which would inevitably ensue. "This resolution," according to Pichon, who remained aloof from the social embroglio, "was carried out at a dinner given some days afterward by M. Yrujo." In addition, it was agreed that Mrs. Merry and Mme. Yrujo would boycott all presidential and cabinet affairs until the obnoxious pell-mell rule was dropped. Pichon reported to his government that neither Mme. Yrujo nor Mrs. Merry attended the traditional White House levee on New Year's Day, 1804, and that Yrujo himself "took care to answer everyone who inquired after his wife's health, that she was perfectly well."⁶²

Jefferson was furious at what he considered an insult to

the dignity of the presidency and an impediment to harmonious diplomatic accord between the United States, England and Spain. "The principle of society with us, as well as of our political constitution," he wrote William Short, "is the equal rights of all; and if there be an occasion where this equality ought to prevail preëminently, it is in social circles collected for conviviality: nobody shall be above you, nor you above anybody, pêle-mêle is our law."⁶³ Convinced that Mrs. Merry was a "virago" and that she was directly responsible for the farcical social controversy, the President determined to maintain his principles of etiquette at all costs. "If [Merry's] wife perseveres," he wrote Monroe, "she must eat her soup at home, and we shall endeavor to draw him into society as if she did not exist. It is unfortunate that the good understanding of nations should hang on the caprice of an individual who ostensibly has nothing to do with them."⁶⁴

The Merrys, therefore, continued to bear the brunt of Jefferson's canons of etiquette, and the subsequent Jerome Bonaparte affair added fuel to the fire. Jerome, Napoleon's brother, had recently married Elizabeth Patterson, the niece of Jefferson's Secretary of the Navy, Samuel Smith. Upon visiting Washington, the newlyweds were wined and dined by the Jeffersonians, who sponsored a gala celebration dinner for them. At this fête, Jefferson, contrary to his own rules, led the glamorous Mme. Bonaparte to dinner, giving her the honored position on his right.

When the Merrys and Yrujos heard of this, of course, their indignation rose anew.⁶⁵

The crowning blow, according to one writer, "came when Mrs. Merry, beginning to relent, accepted an evening invitation to the Madisons' and found her haberdasher and his wife to be among the company invited to meet her."⁶⁶ By this time, Mrs. Merry was beginning to recognize the utter hopelessness of her situation. Either she had to swallow her pride and submit to democratic manners and etiquette or to withdraw from society completely. She chose the latter course, remaining in a state of social isolation until her husband's recall in 1806. Sir Augustus Foster, himself bitterly resenting American manners, sympathetically described the trials and tribulations endured by this proud, but somewhat foolish English lady:

In one way or another, either by remarking on her dress or diamonds or treading on her gown, they wearied Mrs. Merry to such a degree that I have sometimes seen her on coming home burst into tears at having to live at such a place, particularly on seeing the affected impoliteness of those who should have known better, but who, being ratters from the Federal party seeking favour and place, made use of her assemblies in order to render their boorish humors, as well as their concurrence with the systematic manners of Mr. Jefferson, more conspicuous.⁶⁷

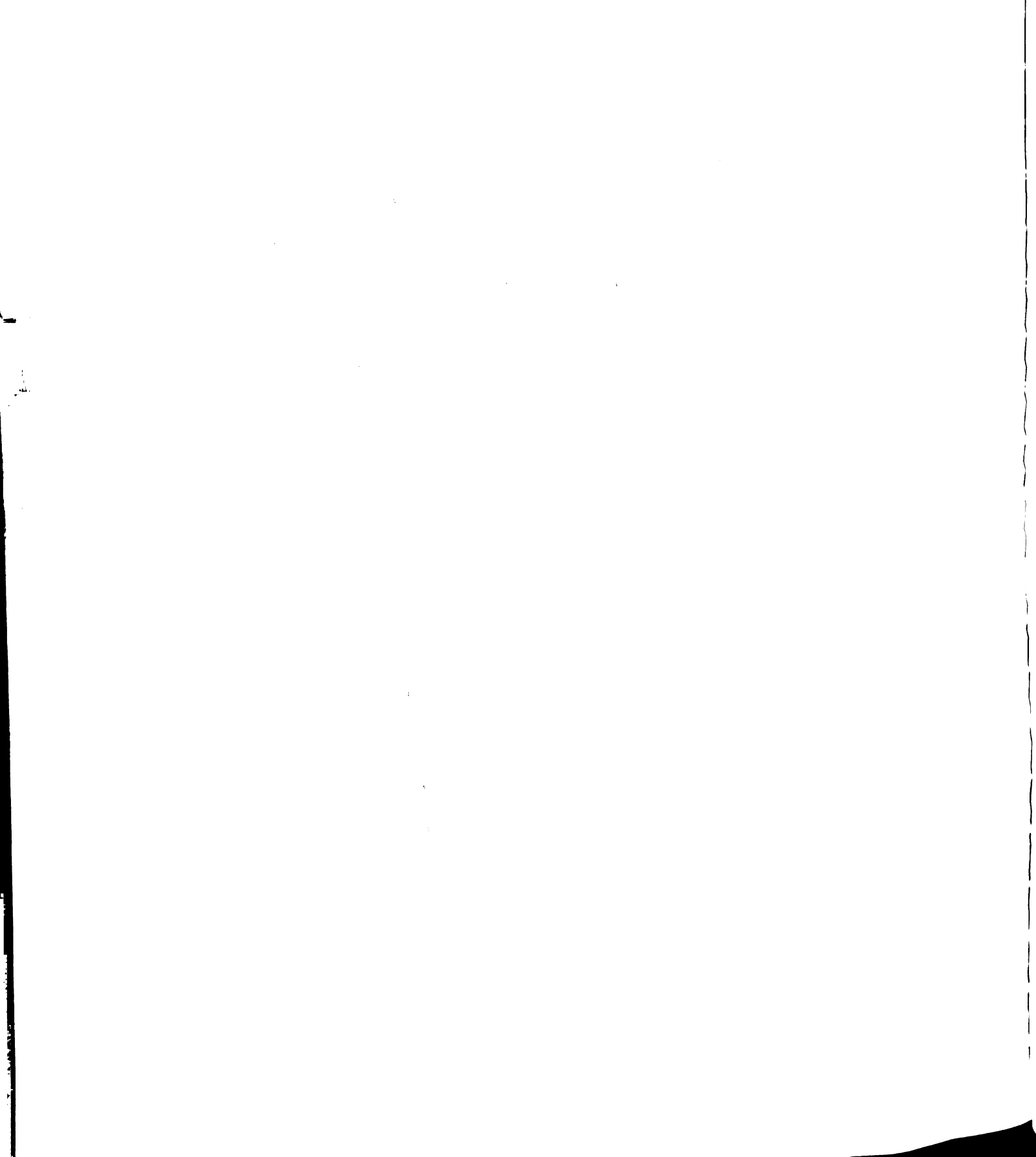
Although Mrs. Merry's withdrawal from Washington society was construed in many quarters as being a serious matter, it

could in no way compare to the sinister intrigues of her husband, first with the New England Federalists and then with Aaron Burr. Whether Merry was motivated by the social embarrassments suffered at the hands of Jefferson is difficult to determine. Nevertheless, it seems more than coincidental that he soon "became the confidant of all the intriguers in Washington, and gave to their intrigues the support of his official influence."⁶⁸ Both he and Yrujo "listened with a ready ear to the Federalist conspiracy for the secession of New England," while Yrujo himself instigated a vigorous newspaper campaign with the sole intention of embarrassing the administration.⁶⁹ Much more significantly, Merry soon became involved in the infamous Burr Conspiracy.

Ten days following his fatal duel with Alexander Hamilton, Vice-President Aaron Burr fled from New York. On July 23, 1804 he reached Philadelphia, where Merry was vacationing. Recognizing their mutual animosity towards Jefferson, Burr immediately contacted Merry, informing him of his plot and requesting the aid of the British government in its execution. Merry quickly transmitted this startling information to the Foreign Office.⁷⁰ But contrary to Merry's expectations, his government responded only with silence. Then, shortly after Burr had resigned his position as Vice-President, Merry again

beseached the Foreign Office to support his scheme: "I have only to add," he wrote Harrowby, "that if a strict confidence could be placed in him, he certainly possesses, perhaps in a much greater degree than any other individual in this country, all the talents, energy, intrepidity, and firmness which are required for such an enterprise."⁷¹ Once again Merry was met with only silence on the part of his government, and the Burr conspiracy was left to proceed without British aid -- much to the apparent chargin of minister Merry.

Although the social war between the foreign ministers and the Jefferson administration did have profound domestic repercussions, it caused scarcely a ripple overseas. Both Madison and Jefferson wrote lengthy letters to Monroe in London, advising him of the Merry affair and warning him to expect reprisals from the British government. Madison's fourteen-page letter is perhaps the best source available on the crisis of Washington society. The Secretary of State, explaining that Merry's "feelings had been deeply wounded," described the social war as being "nauseous" and "frivolous" and in conclusion apologized to Monroe for "having put so much trash on paper."⁷² Madison and Jefferson worried themselves needlessly; the British government was not about to provoke an international incident over American diplomatic etiquette and protocol.



In point of fact, Merry's communications and despatches describing the uncivil manner in which he and Mrs. Merry were being treated in Washington were not even answered by the Foreign Office. Nevertheless, Monroe reported a sequence of events he and Mrs. Monroe experienced in London which may or may not have been connected with the Merry episode. On March 3, 1804, he informed Madison that "the Queen, at the time the Etiquette story was in circulation, I thought passed me in the crowd intentionally. It might not be so," he added, "as her drawing room is without order, a confused multitude" ⁷³ In a later letter, Monroe reported several earlier slights and incivilities he and Mrs. Monroe had been subjected to, but concluded that "all this preceded the affair of Mr. Merry, and had no connection with it." ⁷⁴

On several other occasions, however, he had reason to believe that perhaps Merry's despatches provoked more irritation than he had originally supposed. At a dinner at Lord Hawkesbury's, for instance, he referred to flower festivals in South Carolina which brought out "a great concourse of people with gay equipages." At this point, Lord Castlereagh sarcastically asked the American minister what kind of equipages he was referring to. "I could not but be surprised at the enquiry," Monroe wrote, "nevertheless replied, such as I saw here."

Sir Wm. Scott then remarked that he had lately read an acct. of a grand fete at the cape of good

hope, which concluded with that all 'the beauty
taste & fashion of Africa were assembled there.'
This occasion'd some mirth as you will suppose
at our expense, in which I could not well par-
take⁷⁵

Monroe finally came to the conclusion that these remarks were
not connected with the Merry affair and presumed "that there
was no disrespect intended us."⁷⁶

Although the long-range results of the social conflict
were inconsequential internationally, the realization that his
extremism in matters of diplomatic etiquette and protocol may
have pushed Merry and Yrujo to the brink of conspiracy must
have had a sobering effect upon Jefferson. Evidently realizing
that the alienation of foreign ministers by social or any other
means was not the best method of promoting international har-
mony, the President somewhat modified his strict adherence
to republican simplicity following his re-election in 1804. This
was especially apparent in his dressing habits during diplomatic
audiences and receptions. When the President gave an official
audience to Turreau, the new French envoy sent to replace Pichon,
his appearance was far different from that which greeted Merry
during his initial presentation. "He has improved much in the
article of dress," Senator Plumer reported; "he has laid aside
the old slippers, red waistcoat, and soiled corduroy small-
clothes, and was dressed all in black, with clean linen and
powdered hair."⁷⁷

But this was as far as Jefferson chose to depart from his pattern of simplicity in regard to diplomatic etiquette and protocol. Pell-mell remained the rule, and the President continued to slight foreign ministers throughout his second administration. On New Year's Day, 1806, for example, he apparently went to great lengths to snub Merry, whose tour of duty in the United States was nearing its end. Sir Augustus Foster reported that among the guests at this reception were a number of American Indians. Jefferson, "who was so much attached to them from philanthropy and because they were savages as if they were his own children, . . . appeared wholly taken up with his natives." Merry and Foster believed that the President was intentionally slighting them and they decided "not to stay and be treated so and we went away after remaining five minutes. . . ."78

Jeffersonian diplomatic etiquette, at least when the cases of Merry and Yrujo are considered, clearly worked to the nation's disadvantage. Accordingly, future Presidents of the United States would refrain from pushing republican simplicity to the extremes that Jefferson had. Strict pell-mell would retire with Jefferson to Monticello. The question remains, however, as to why Jefferson departed so far from the more polished and highly successful policies of his predecessors.

Several writers have maintained that Jefferson's canons

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of etiquette was his way of announcing a "cool" policy towards Great Britain and Spain.⁷⁹ This supposition, however, is extremely hypothetical and at a distinct variance with the evidence available. In point of fact, both Jefferson and Madison went out of their way to dispel any notion that their social actions were related to international political motivations. Writing to Monroe, for example, Madison strongly affirmed "that the Government of the United States is sincerely and anxiously disposed to cultivate harmony between the two nations. The President wishes to lose no opportunity and spare no pains that may be necessary to satisfy the British administration on this head, and to prevent or efface any different impressions which may be transmitted from [Merry] ." ⁸⁰

The foreign ministers themselves were convinced that Jefferson's behavior was designed, according to Pichon, "to sacrifice everything for the sake of his popularity." ⁸¹ Pichon's analysis was echoed by two future British ministers to the United States -- Stratford Canning and Augustus Foster. Canning remarked that Jefferson's "bearing appears to have been very much that of a political coxcomb. Among his competitors were some whom he could hardly have expected to surpass by genuine merit, and it is allowable to presume that he sought to give weight to his own scale by popular manners and revolutionary principles." ⁸² Foster

was even more explicit in his assessment of Jeffersonian protocol: "The President's popularity was unfortunately connected with his manners as well as with his acts and he and his party seemed sometimes to be on the look-out how best to humble us and run counter to all our received notions of propriety and etiquette."⁸³ Moreover, according to Foster, Jefferson was merely "playing a game for retaining the highest offices in a state where manners are not a prevailing feature in the great mass of society"⁸⁴

A more reasonable explanation for the President's actions has been advanced recently in James Sterling Young's account of the social structure of the national capital during the Jeffersonian era. Young maintains that the diplomatic corps was a highly pompous lot and that their actions, sentiments, and manner of living was resented by the Americans. "In a society where most executive employees lived in poverty or on the brink of it, they strutted in ruffled shirts and silver spurs, or tiaras and ropes of diamonds, and sent fifty miles to Baltimore for table delicacies." Such flamboyance, Young concludes, probably accounts for the negative reaction produced. Although many cultural antipathies existed in Washington during the early national period, "none were so deep or irreconcilable as those between the Old World and the New, thrown into intimate confrontation in the executive community."⁸⁵

Jefferson himself never specifically explained the reasons which prompted his departure from the diplomatic manners established under Washington and Adams. It seems reasonable to believe, however, that he was at least partially motivated by his personal aversion toward diplomacy and diplomatic procedure in general. "I have ever considered diplomacy as the pest of the peace of the world," he wrote William Short, "as the workshop in which nearly all the wars of Europe are manufactured."⁸⁶

Whatever the motivation, it is clear that Jeffersonian diplomatic etiquette and protocol was largely a facade. In truth, the President was a Virginia aristocrat accustomed to the niceties and fineries common to the upper stratum of American society. He was not a yeoman farmer, but rather the proprietor of a large plantation. Although his official wardrobe consisted in part of heelless slippers, red corduroy vests, and soiled linen, his private wardrobe -- worn in the privacy of Monticello -- included the finest and most expensive European garments available.⁸⁷ Moreover, as his earlier diplomatic career demonstrates, he was not a stranger to the intricacies of European diplomatic etiquette and protocol. In fact, Jefferson went a step further than most American diplomats abroad in his submission to European usage when he accepted a token gift from the French court upon his recall in 1789. More significantly and perhaps ironically in view of his later attitude

in regard to diplomatic manners, Jefferson even supported the brief American experiment of bestowing gifts upon foreign ministers during his term as Secretary of State.

It is to this facet of American diplomatic etiquette and protocol -- the giving and accepting of gifts and gratuities -- that this discussion must now turn.

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⁴ Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, January 30, 1789, in Thomas Jefferson, The Basic Writings of Thomas Jefferson, ed. Philip S. Foner (New York: Willey, 1944), 551.

⁵ Cited in Cresson, James Monroe, 202-203.

⁶ National Intelligencer (Washington), March 6, 1801, 2.

⁷ Schachner, Jefferson, 661, and Bernard Mayo, Jefferson Himself: The Personal Narrative of a Many-Sided American (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1942), 219-20.

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¹¹ Bess Furman, White House Profile, A Social History of the White House, its Occupants and its Festivities (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1951), 37.

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¹⁴ Cited in Lynn W. Turner, William Plumer of New Hampshire, 1759-1850 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1962), 94-95.

¹⁵Thomas Jefferson to General Thaddeus Kosciusko, April 2, 1802, in Jefferson, Writings, X, 310.

¹⁶Katherine Anthony, Dolly Madison, Her Life and Times (Garden City: Doubleday, 1949), 123.

¹⁷Anne Hollingsworth Wharton, Salons: Colonial and Republican (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1900), 189.

¹⁸Thomas Jefferson, The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, 10 vols., ed. Paul Leicester Ford (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1892-1899), VIII, 276-77; hereafter cited as Jefferson, Writings, (Ford).

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²⁰Henry Adams, History of the United States of America during the Administrations of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, 1801-1817, 9 vols. (New York: Antiquarian Press, 1962), II, 360.

²¹Rufus King to James Madison, April 10, 1802, cited in Ibid., 360-61.

²²James Madison to James Monroe, December 26, 1803, in Madison, Letters, II, 189.

²³Cited in Mayo, Jefferson Himself, 234.

²⁴Merry to Hawkesbury, December 6, 1803, in Great Britain, Foreign Office, F.O.-5, Foreign Correspondence: United States, XLI, 25; Library of Congress photostat, hereafter cited as F.O.-5.

²⁵Bindoff, British Diplomatic Representatives, 185.

²⁶Anne N. Royall, Sketches of History, Life and Manners, in the United States (New Haven: Privately printed, 1826), 130.

²⁷Augustus John Foster, Jeffersonian America: Notes on the United States of America Collected in the Years 1805-6-7 and 11-12 by Sir Augustus John Foster, Bart., ed. Richard Beale Davis (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1954), 21.

²⁸Cited in Carson, Polite Americans, 96.

²⁹Cited in Helen Nicolay, Our Capital on the Potomac (New York: Century, 1924), 70.

³⁰Merry to Hammond (private), December 7, 1803, in F.O.5, XLI, 28-29 (L.C. photostat).

³¹Mrs. Smith to Mrs. Kirkpatrick, January 23, 1804, in Smith, Washington Society, 46.

³²Plumer, Memorandum, 448.

³³Cited in Mayo, Jefferson Himself, 234.

³⁴Statement by Dolly Madison, cited in Anthony, Dolly Madison, 126.

³⁵Editorial note in Thomas Jefferson, "Jefferson to William Short on Mr. and Mrs. Merry, 1804," American Historical Review, XXXIII, No. 4 (July 1928), 832.

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³⁷Ibid.

³⁸JQA Memoirs, II, 95.

³⁹William Short to Thomas Jefferson, May 15, 1792, in Short MSS. (L.C.), XX, 3462-3463.

⁴⁰Adams, History, 365.

⁴¹Merry to Hawkesbury (separate), December 6, 1803, in F.O.5, XLI, 24 (L.C. photostat).

⁴²Merry to Hawkesbury (no.1), December 6, 1803, in Ibid., 1-2.

⁴³James Madison to James Monroe, January 19, 1804, in Monroe MSS., series 1, reel 3.

⁴⁴Merry to Hawkesbury (separate), December 6, 1803, in F.O.5, XLI, 25 (L.C. photostat).

⁴⁵James Madison to James Monroe, January 19, 1804, in Monroe MSS., series 1, reel 3.

⁴⁶Foster, Notes, 54.

⁴⁷Adams, History, II, 367-68.

⁴⁸Merry to Hawkesbury (separate), December 31, 1803, in F.O.5, XLI, 46-47 (L.C. photostat).

⁴⁹Ibid., 46.

⁵⁰Adams, History, II, 368.

⁵¹Merry to Hawkesbury (private), December 7, 1803, in F.O.5, XLI, 28-29 (L.C. photostat).

⁵²James Madison to James Monroe, January 19, 1804, in Monroe MSS., series 1, reel 3.

⁵³Merry to Hawkesbury (separate), December 6, 1803, in F.O.5, XLI, 26 (L.C. photostat); Adams, History, II, 369-70; Dolly Madison, Memoirs and Letters of Dolly Madison, ed. Lucia B. Cutts (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1886), 49.

⁵⁴Yrujo to Cevallos, February 7, 1804, cited in Adams, History, II, 371.

⁵⁵James Madison to James Monroe, January 19, 1804 in Monroe MSS., series 1, reel 3.

⁵⁶Yrujo to Cevallos, February 7, 1804, cited in Adams, History, II, 371.

⁵⁷Pichon to Tallyrand, February 5 and February 13, 1804, in France, Archives Nationales, Affaires Etrangères, Correspondence Politique, LVI (1803-1804), 342-51 and 372-73 (L.C. photostat); hereafter cited as AECP.

⁵⁸Merry to Hammond (private), December 7, 1803, in F.O.5, XLI, 28-29 (L.C. photostat).

⁵⁹Merry to Hawkesbury, December 31, 1803, cited in Adams, History, II, 374.

⁶⁰James Madison to James Monroe, February 16, 1804, in Madison, Letters, II, 197.

⁶¹Nicolay, Our Capital, 80.

⁶²Pichon to Tallyrand, February 5, 1804, in AECF, LVI, (1803-1804), 342-51. For newspaper comment, see: Gazette of the United States, January 17, February 14, and February 17, 1804, and Philadelphia Aurora, January 28, 1804.

⁶³Thomas Jefferson to William Short, January 23, 1804, in A.H.R., XXXIII, 4, 832.

⁶⁴Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, January 8, 1804, in Mayo, Jefferson Himself, 235.

⁶⁵Adams, History, II, 374 and 377 ff.

⁶⁶Brant, Madison, IV, 169.

⁶⁷Foster, Notes, 55.

⁶⁸Adams, History, II, 390.

⁶⁹Schachner, Jefferson, 787.

⁷⁰Merry to Harrowby, August 6, 1804, cited in Adams, History, II, 395.

⁷¹Merry to Harrowby, March 29, 1805, cited in Ibid., 403.

⁷²James Madison to James Monroe, January 19, 1804, in Monroe MSS., series 1, reel 3.

⁷³James Monroe to James Madison, March 3, 1804, in Ibid.

⁷⁴James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, March 15, 1804, in Ibid.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Cited in Adams, History, II, 405.

⁷⁸Foster, Notes, 22-23.

⁷⁹See, for example, George Morgan, The Life of James Monroe (Boston: Small, 1921), 263; Willson, Ambassadors to England, 79; and Anthony, Dolly Madison, 127.

⁸⁰James Madison to James Monroe, February 16, 1804, in Madison, Letters, II, 196.

⁸¹Pichon to Tallyrand, September 3, 1804, cited in Adams, History, II, 404.

⁸²Cited in Stanley Lane-Poole, The Life of the Right Honourable Stratford Canning, From his Memoirs and Private and Official Papers, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, 1888), I, 315-16.

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⁸⁴Ibid., 9.

⁸⁵James Sterling Young, The Washington Community, 1800-1828 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), 220-221.

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CHAPTER FOUR

GIFTS AND EMOLUMENTS

Although there existed many occasions upon which the governments of Europe gave presents to foreign ministers stationed at their respective courts, the two most common instances were upon the conclusion of treaties and international agreements and at the conclusion of the foreign minister's official tour of duty.¹ The nature and value of the presents varied widely from court to court and from diplomat to diplomat. John Quincy Adams, who by his vast and varied diplomatic background in Europe was an expert on such matters, explained that the usual present received by diplomats at the Court of St. James was "a sum of money, graduated according to his rank, or a gold box, or other trinket of equal value,"² while at St. Petersburg "this present usually consists of a gold snuffbox with the portrait of the Emperor enchased in diamonds, the value of which is proportionate to the rank of the minister and to the degree of satisfaction which the Emperor thinks proper to manifest with his conduct during the mission."³

Aside from being a time-honored practice, the bestowing of gifts upon foreign ministers also served a practical purpose. In the first place, since most governments based the

value of their presents upon the degree of favor held by the recipient minister at court,⁴ diplomats would endeavor to do their very best to secure and maintain a favored position. This was indeed practical diplomacy at its best. Secondly and perhaps even more significantly, these gifts and monetary payments provided a convenient source of income with which diplomats paid their own court fees. Every European court possessed a ceremonial office of one kind or another, generally headed by an official known as the master of ceremonies or the introducer of ambassadors and well-staffed by a host of minor officials such as assistant masters of ceremonies, grand chamberlains, petit chamberlains, and porters, to mention a few. As the salaries of these officials was never extremely high, their livelihood depended in large part upon the court fees levied against those foreign ministers who they served in various capacities.

John Quincy Adams was not the only American minister abroad who found himself confronted with "marshals, grooms, porters, and attendants . . . bringing their books to show what had been paid them by all the foreign Ministers, and other persons presented at Court."⁵ Although most of the so-called court fees were unofficial in nature, it was the rare ceremonial officer who neglected to inform the members of the diplomatic corps that certain payments and emoluments were customarily

accorded to his assistants and himself. "It is the custom at the Court of London, on the first presentation of a foreign Minister, as well as at every Christmas during his residence," Rufus King reported in 1804, "to make presents in money to the amount of about £30 sterling on each occasion to the under Officers and Servants of the Court." Among those he felt obligated to compensate were the King's valets and footmen, the sergeant porter of the court, the gentlemen porters, six marshalsmen, the underporters at St. James, the yeomen of the guards, the Queen's porter, underporter, and footman, the grooms of the King's bedchamber ("who give notice of Court mournings"), and the servants and underlings attached to the master of ceremonies and the assistant master of ceremonies.

Inasmuch as his salary (like those of other American diplomats during this period) was woefully inadequate, Rufus King petitioned Secretary of State Madison for additional funds with which to pay these court fees. "This contribution no foreign Minister declines giving; and it is not a personal, but official tribute, on the payment whereof there is no option as in the case of ordinary expenses; I may safely add my conviction that there is not a single foreign Minister to whom this extra charge is not allowed by his Government."⁶ After consulting with President Jefferson, Madison wrote back to King giving the government's

permission to draw the necessary money with which to pay the court fees.⁷

Unfortunately for King and other American ministers abroad, the government of the United States not only underpaid her diplomatic representatives,⁸ but also expressly denied them the privilege of accepting gifts from the governments of those countries in which they served. Had the situation been otherwise, American ministers like King would have been in a position to convert their gifts, providing the gift was not money already, into negotiable currency to pay their necessary court fees -- a procedure which seems to have been quite common among the European diplomatic corps.⁹

Furthermore, assuming that the diplomat was unusually talented and thereby especially admired by the court in which he served, there would be a substantial amount of money remaining after the court fees had been paid. This was in keeping with the excessive nature of diplomatic gift-giving in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. John Quincy Adams wrote that although the salaries of European ministers were not exorbitant, most of the ministers were able to live on a fairly grand scale owing to the profits incurred from diplomatic gifts. Adams reported that Lord Castlereagh, "in the course of his negotiations at the Vienna Congress, and at Paris, received twenty-four

snuffboxes, each worth one thousand pounds sterling, besides other articles equally costly," while Count Romanzoff, a former Russian diplomat and chancellor, "had made up a fund from the value of all the presents of this kind that he had ever received, and made an appropriation of the whole . . . to the public service of the State, in aid of the pensions granted to invalid and wounded soldiers."¹⁰

The Constitution of the United States specifically declares that "No Title of Nobility shall be granted by the United States: And no Person holding any Office of Profit or Trust under them, shall, without the Consent of the Congress, accept of any present, Emolument, Office, or Title, of any kind whatever, from any King, Prince, or foreign State."¹¹ Introduced by C. C. Pinckney, this provision was one of the few measures adopted by the Constitutional Convention without visible opposition. According to James Madison's record of the convention proceedings, Pinckney maintained that the purpose of including such a provision in the new Constitution was to keep "foreign ministers & other officers of the United States independent of external influence."¹² Edmund Randolph was even more specific on this point. He maintained that "this restriction is provided to prevent corruption. All men have a natural inherent right of receiving emoluments from any one, unless they be restrained by the regulations of the community.

It was thought proper, in order to exclude corruption and foreign influence, to prohibit any one in office from receiving or holding any emoluments from foreign states."¹³

The original draft of the Constitution as reported by the Committee of Detail on August 6, 1787 merely stipulated that "The United States shall not grant any Title of Nobility."¹⁴ Pinckney's suggestion enlarged the clause to read: "The United States shall not grant any Title of Nobility. No person holding any office of profit or trust under the U. S. shall without the consent of the Legislature, accept of any present, emolument, office or title of any kind whatever, from any King, Prince, or foreign State." After several additional revisions in regard to exact terminology (without altering the meaning of the stipulation),¹⁵ it was formally incorporated into the Constitution as the eighth clause of the ninth section of Article I.

Although this clause apparently did not generate any overt opposition at the Constitutional Convention itself, the going was a bit more difficult in several of the specially elected state ratifying conventions. Members of the ratifying conventions did not believe that the stipulation was an infringement upon the rights of American diplomats. On the contrary, it was felt that the clause was not strong enough. Especially objectionable in the eyes of several men was the segment of the clause which

provided that gifts could be accepted if congressional approval was obtained. In the Virginia convention, for example, George Mason adamantly maintained that this loophole would inevitably lead to abuse,¹⁶ while Melancton Smith, in the New York convention, moved "that the Congress shall at no time consent that any person, holding any office of profit or trust in or under the United States, shall accept of any title of nobility from any king, prince, or foreign state."¹⁷ Despite these attempts at revision, however, the clause as originally proposed was ultimately accepted. With its acceptance and its formal inclusion in the Constitution, a major diplomatic problem which would require years to resolve was created.

Mason and Smith had worried themselves needlessly over what they considered to be a loophole in the constitutional provision forbidding the acceptance of presents from foreign governments. Congress quickly established a precedent which provided that congressional approval for the accepting of a diplomatic gift, even if applied for, would not likely be forthcoming. Ironically, the specific instance which prompted Congress to establish this precedent involved Thomas Pinckney of South Carolina -- the brother of C. C. Pinckney, who had introduced the passage into the Constitution in the first place.

Thomas Pinckney was the American minister to the Court

of St. James from 1792 until 1796, as well as an envoy extraordinary to Spain in 1796. In this latter capacity, he successfully negotiated the important treaty of San Lorenzo el Real, whereby the Spanish government surrendered all claims to American territory east of the Mississippi River and north of the thirty-first parallel, granted to the Americans the right of deposit at New Orleans and freedom of navigation on the Mississippi, and provided for a joint settlement of claims and restriction of Indian depredations.¹⁸

Flushed with success and enthusiasm, Pinckney returned to the United States where he became the unsuccessful Federalist candidate for Vice-President in the election of 1796. Although frustrated in his attempt to secure the vice-presidency, Pinckney nonetheless did win a seat in the House of Representatives. While in this post, he addressed a letter to the Chairman of the House, explaining that the governments of Great Britain and Spain had both offered him the usual diplomatic gifts upon the conclusion of his mission and upon the signing of the treaty of 1796 respectively, but that he had temporarily declined accepting them on the grounds of the constitutional restriction. His letter further indicated that he was now desirous of obtaining the permission of Congress to accept the proffered emoluments.¹⁹

Pinckney's request was subsequently brought before the

entire House, where it was debated at great length. Those opposed to his acceptance of the gifts pointed out the unrepugnant nature of gift-giving in general and the implicit tendency toward corruption. Moreover, they were hesitant in establishing a precedent which might later prove impossible to violate. On the other hand, Pinckney's supporters argued that he had rendered the United States an invaluable service by negotiating the highly favorable treaty of 1796. On this account they felt that he should be permitted to accept the diplomatic presents from Great Britain and Spain. Pinckney's request, after a great deal of further debate, was subsequently denied.²⁰ Several days after the final decision, however, the chairman of the committee on foreign affairs sponsored another resolution which declared that Congress was "induced to such refusal solely by motives of general policy, and not by any view personal" to Pinckney himself. Moreover, it was affirmed that "the purity of this gentleman's character, and the importance of his services furnished a happy opportunity of establishing an invariable rule precluding the acceptance of presents, which no merit hereafter should induce the House to depart from."²¹

During the period of the Confederation, with no constitutional provision to stand in their way, most American ministers had not been above accepting diplomatic presents from

European governments. Benjamin Franklin, Silas Deane, and Arthur Lee each had received a gold snuffbox from France upon signing the Franco-American treaty of alliance in 1778.²² Franklin also received another gift upon the occasion of his taking leave of the French court, where he had served as American minister plenipotentiary. According to his grandson, Franklin's present "was supposed to be worth fifteen hundred Louis d'ors, and consisted in a large Miniature of the King, set with four hundred and eight Diamonds, of a beautiful Water, forming a Wreath round the Picture and a Crown on the Top."²³ Moreover, John Jay and John Adams were offered and accepted diplomatic gifts from Spain and Great Britain respectively,²⁴ while Adams also received "a chain and medal of gold, of the value of thirteen hundred florins" when he took leave of his diplomatic position in the United Netherlands.²⁵

Apparently, none of these American recipients of diplomatic gifts -- with the sole exception of Lee -- felt obliged to consult the Confederation Congress with respect to the advisability of accepting the presents. Upon his return to the United States, Lee wrote to the President of Congress explaining that he had received a gift from the French court, but that "as it was in consequence of my having been a commissioner of Congress at that court, I do not think it becomes me to retain this present without

the express approbation of Congress."²⁶ In an earlier letter to the congressional committee of foreign affairs, Lee had explained that "I thought it my duty to decline accepting it, upon which [Vergennes] told me it was a mark of his majesty's esteem, and was never refused. After this it appeared to me improper to persist in the refusal, and I received it with a determination to leave it to the disposal of Congress."²⁷ The Congress, itself preoccupied with matters of diplomatic etiquette and protocol, decided that there was no reason why Lee should not retain the gift -- thereby establishing a precedent to be followed in similar cases.²⁸

With the adoption of the Constitution, however, this precedent ceased to apply and was superceded by one more in keeping with republican simplicity. Throughout the early national period, moreover, most American diplomats abroad abided by the constitutional restriction against the accepting of diplomatic gifts. Rufus King, for example, related that upon his taking leave of the English court in 1803, "the master of the Ceremonies Sir Stephen Cottrell informed me that it was the usage of the King to make a present in money to the Minister who had taken leave A similar communication was likewise made to me by the Office for foreign affairs, which in the King's name makes a present to all foreign ministers, who have signed Treaties or conventions with Great Britain." The American minister's answer in both instances

was "that as my own Government did not make presents to foreign ministers, and plenipotentiaries, on like occasions, I did not think myself at liberty to accept the presents which were offered to me."²⁹

James Monroe, United States minister to France during the period 1794-1796, recorded in his Autobiography that upon his presentation to the French court he was offered "a house for his accommodation . . . in any part of Paris which he should designate," in addition to a carriage with horses for his personal use. "To the offer of the house he gave an immediate answer, in which he declined it on the principle that it was forbidden by an Article of the Constitution of the United States" Writing in the third person, Monroe related that he had retained the carriage "a few weeks until he had procured one of his own, and then returned it, with the horses, asking permission to pay for them in like manner as he had procured those of an individual, which was granted."³⁰

Although neither Richard Rush nor John Quincy Adams can be called "strict constructionists" in the usual sense of the phrase, they were among the most persistent and outspoken defenders of the constitutional clause prohibiting the acceptance of diplomatic gifts or emoluments. During his residence at the Court of St. James (1817-25), Richard Rush steadfastly refused

to yield to the pressures of those determined to present him with various gifts. On one occasion, Rush was sent several silver medals from Don Juan Gaecia del Rio and General Paroissien, "two envoys of the government of Peru, who have recently arrived in London."³¹ Writing to the State Department, Rush explained that he "did not feel at liberty to accept" the medals, despite the fact that they were personal and not official tokens of esteem. Aware that his decision to refuse the medals might be misconstrued by the Peruvian envoys, Rush subsequently persuaded them to address the gift to the government of the United States rather than to himself. This was accordingly done. Rush then forwarded the medals to the Department of State and thereby avoided offending the Peruvians.³²

Shortly after the coronation of George IV of Great Britain, Rush wrote that "Sir Robert Chester waited upon me with a coronation medal, of which he asked my acceptance. It was of gold, with a bust of the King on one side, and on the other several emblematic representations, including Britannica with Neptune's trident." Rush, of course, declined to accept the medal "with expressions of respect towards His Majesty proper to be used, and under every sensibility to the honor of being invited to his coronation; but alleged that the Constitution of the United States prohibited their Foreign Ministers receiving a present from any Foreign Prince or

Potentate." Chester, the master of ceremonies at the Court of St. James, then offered the medal to Rush's wife, who had accompanied him to the coronation, with the observation "that our Constitution surely did not mention the ladies!" But Rush quickly reminded Chester of the "old common law . . . which was part of our inheritance in the United States, and a good inheritance we thought it, though it did, ungallently, make the wife's gold the husband's; so that it ended in our losing the medal both ways."³³

The Writings and Memoirs of John Quincy Adams contain numerous references to the practice of diplomatic gift-giving. In fact, Adams's many barbed comments in regard to diplomatic gifts gives the impression that he was obsessed with this issue throughout his public life. From his initial experience in the royal courts of Europe until his post-presidential career in the House of Representatives as "Old Man Eloquence", Adams continually condemned the European practice of giving "bauble presents" to foreign ministers.³⁴ Like Rush, Adams made no distinction between personal or private gifts and official gifts. While he was American minister plenipotentiary at St. Petersburg in 1812, for example, a certain Mr. Raimbert gave Mrs. Adams "a present of porcelain." But Adams immediately informed Raimbert that acceptance of the gift

was quite impossible -- "it being a principle which I had found it necessary to adopt from the first day that I became a public man, never to accept for myself or my family, while I hold any public office, a present of more than trifling value from any person." He explained to Raimbert (who "appeared to feel a little mortification") that the reasoning behind this principle was due not only to his own sense of propriety, "but was altogether conformable to the general sentiment of my country, which was more punctilious on this subject than any European nation, and which was peculiarly strict with regard to their Ministers abroad."³⁵

Although Adams had previously accepted "presents of fruit and other small things" from Raimbert, he felt that the value of the porcelain gift was far in excess of the limits of propriety.³⁶ In this respect, he subsequently wrote a rather lengthy commentary on the unfortunate tendency for the giving of small inconsequential gifts to develop into the bestowing of those of a more excessive nature:

The refusal of presents is one of the occasions on which I have found it most difficult, ever since I have been in the public service, to act with perfect propriety; and that difficulty becomes not a little aggravated when they are offered to my family and not to myself. Were it possible for me to prevent it, not the value of a dollar should be offered by anybody to any of us; but those who forbear presenting anything to me sometimes address themselves where refusal may not be thought my duty; and those who begin with trifles, which it

would be affectation rather than virtue to reject, rise gradually to articles of cost and value, which renders it indispensable to recur to the standard of spotless integrity.³⁷

From his diplomatic position at St. Petersburg, Adams travelled to Ghent, where he headed the American delegation which signed the Treaty of Ghent (1814), thereby ending the War of 1812. From Ghent, Adams was transferred to London, where he was to serve as minister plenipotentiary of the United States from 1815 to 1817. Upon the termination of his mission to Great Britain, he was offered the usual gift of £500 (ambassadors received £1000) by Sir Robert Chester as a token of His Majesty's esteem. Adams reminded Chester of the constitutional restriction which forbade American ministers to accept gifts from foreign governments. "He acquiesced in this with apparent cheerfulness," Adams wrote, "though probably not without reluctance," as ten-percent of this gift was usually deducted as a douceur to the master of ceremonies.³⁸

Shortly after this incident, Adams recorded in his Memoirs a thoroughgoing condemnation of diplomatic gift-giving. He began by indicating that the constitutional restriction "has my hearty approbation, and I wish it may be inflexibly adhered to hereafter." Furthermore, he maintained that the European usage of giving diplomatic gifts was "absurd, indelicate, with at least

very strong tendencies toward corruption." Adams felt that the United States should at all costs maintain the principle prohibiting her ministers from accepting such gifts, "because, as they never make presents to the Ministers of foreign powers who have been accredited to them, there is not even the plea of reciprocity to allege for following it." In other words, Adams felt that for American ministers to accept gifts while the United States itself refused to give gifts would have had the effect of making the American ministers appear "as beggars receiving alms from opulent princes, than as the independent representatives of a high-minded and virtuous republic."³⁹

When Adams became Secretary of State under President Monroe in 1817, he was afforded an opportunity to give full vent to his adversity toward diplomatic gift-giving. Accordingly, he gave top priority to these considerations when he drafted his "Form of Personal Instructions" to American ministers abroad. "A Custom prevails among the European Sovereigns, upon the conclusion of Treaties," Adams began, "of bestowing Presents of Jewelry or other articles of pecuniary value, upon the Minister of the Power with which they were negotiated." The same practice, he further noted, occurred at the time of a minister's taking leave of the court at which he was stationed. "The acceptance of such Presents by Ministers of the United States is

expressly prohibited by the Constitution; and even if it were not, it can scarcely be consistent with the delicacy of intercourse with Foreign Powers, for the Ministers of the United States to receive from Foreign Powers such favors as the Ministers of those Princes to the United States never can receive from this government in return." In other words, "the usage, exceptional in itself can be tolerable only by its reciprocity." He then proceeded to direct American diplomats to "respectfully but decisively" decline the acceptance of any such gift. Using his own diplomatic experience as a guide, Adams explained that refusals to accept diplomatic gifts were at times interpreted as a personal affront to the governments in question. To avoid any such unpleasantness, therefore, he advised that "it will be proper if any occasion should happen upon which you may have reason to except such an offer, to give, in the proper quarter informal notice, which may anticipate the necessity of refusal by averting the customary offer."⁴⁰

Admirable as such advice may have been, however, American diplomats abroad during the early national period found it exceedingly difficult to refuse diplomatic gifts without arousing the insensibilities of the giver. In many cases, therefore, the perplexed ministers had no choice nor recourse than to accept the proffered presents. President Washington's former advisor,

David Humphreys, for example, found that all of his protestations and references to the constitutional provision prohibiting the acceptance of gifts had little effect upon the Spanish government, which proceeded to send Mrs. Humphreys a box of expensive jewels at the conclusion of Humphrey's term of duty as minister plenipotentiary in 1802. Humphreys, in turn, delivered this gift into the hands of President Jefferson, hoping thereby to find a solution for the proper disposal of the gift.⁴¹ Jefferson, however, passed the jewels on to Secretary of State Madison, who was instructed to return them to Humphreys. Madison wrote Humphreys, explaining that "the President has thought it most proper that the ornaments addressed to Mrs. Humphreys by the Queen of Spain should be returned into your hands, without deciding how far the Constitution may or may not be applicable to this particular case."⁴²

In 1830, Charles Rhind, who had been sent by President Jackson to conclude a treaty of commerce and navigation with Turkey on May 7, was presented with four Arabian horses as a token of the Sultan's esteem and gratitude. Realizing that he was not permitted, as an American diplomatic agent, to accept such gifts, he hesitated and ultimately refused the acceptance of the horses. The representatives of the Sultan informed Rhind that failure to accept the gift would be interpreted as an insult

to the Sultan and might endanger the status of the recently concluded treaty. "Being well informed that to refuse them would be considered an insult to the Sultan," Rhind later explained to President Jackson, "and would doubtless be attended with injury to the interests of the United States . . . I was consequently obliged to take them."⁴³ Rhind then returned to the United States, accompanied on the long Atlantic voyage by his four Arabian horses. Upon arrival, President Jackson threw the matter into the lap of Congress, which subsequently decided that it would be contrary to the Constitution for Rhind to retain these animals.⁴⁴ Finally, in May 1831, the government managed to sell the horses at public auction for the sum of \$1990, which proved to be insufficient to even compensate for their transportation and keep.⁴⁵

In 1833, President Jackson was confronted with a similar problem when the American consul at Tangier reported that the Emperor of Morocco had given him "an enormous lion and two fine horses." The horses were intended for the personal use of the consul, whereas the lion was intended as a gift to the government of the United States. Congress decided on February 13, 1835, that the horses be sold at public auction, while the lion should be presented "to such suitable institution, person, or persons," as the President might designate.⁴⁶ This incident,

coupled with the Rhind episode, prompted Jackson to have Secretary of State Louis McLane direct a circular to all American ministers abroad which stated "that it is required of them that, in future, they will not, unless the consent of Congress shall have been previously obtained, accept, under any circumstances, presents of any kind whatever, from any king, prince or foreign state."⁴⁷

Perhaps the most interesting instance of an American foreign minister accepting (and in this case retaining) a diplomatic gift from a foreign nation during the early national period involved Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson had served as American minister to France from 1785 until 1789. Upon returning to the United States to serve as President Washington's Secretary of State, he wrote a lengthy letter on April 6, 1790 to William Short, his former secretary and loyal confidant, who had remained in France as American chargé d'affaires. He requested that Short "make the accustomed present for me" to Tolozan, the French Introducteur des Ambassadeurs, and to his secretary, Sequeville. Tolozan was to receive a gold snuffbox worth 1200 livres, while Sequeville's box was to have the value of 800 livres. "But I believe the latter would prefer the money wrapped up in a wish that he should chuse a box for himself. Perhaps the former would also. If not, let as little be lost in

the workmanship as possible, that it may be worth the more to him when disposed of." Upon accomplishing this, Short was instructed to "let the Introducer and Secretary know in time that I cannot receive [sic] the accustomed present from the king," owing to the prohibitory "clause in our new constitution." Jefferson urged Short not to mention that the Constitution provided that gifts might be accepted if congressional approval were obtained. Jefferson maintained that as he did not want "to be laid on the gridiron of debate in Congress for any such paltry purpose . . . the Introducer need not be told of this qualification of the rule."⁴⁸

On June 29, 1790 Short reported to Jefferson that he had spoken "to Tolozan relative to the present and mentioned to him that you were prohibited by the constitution from accepting one from the King." But Tolozan had replied that if Jefferson would not accept his gift then he would in turn refuse to accept the usual gratuity from Jefferson. Short wrote that "Sequeville gave me the same answer and in order to prove that the etiquette was such he gave me the whole history of his appointment and long services in the place he holds. The essential was that the present made by a foreign minister was a consequence of the one made by the King."⁴⁹

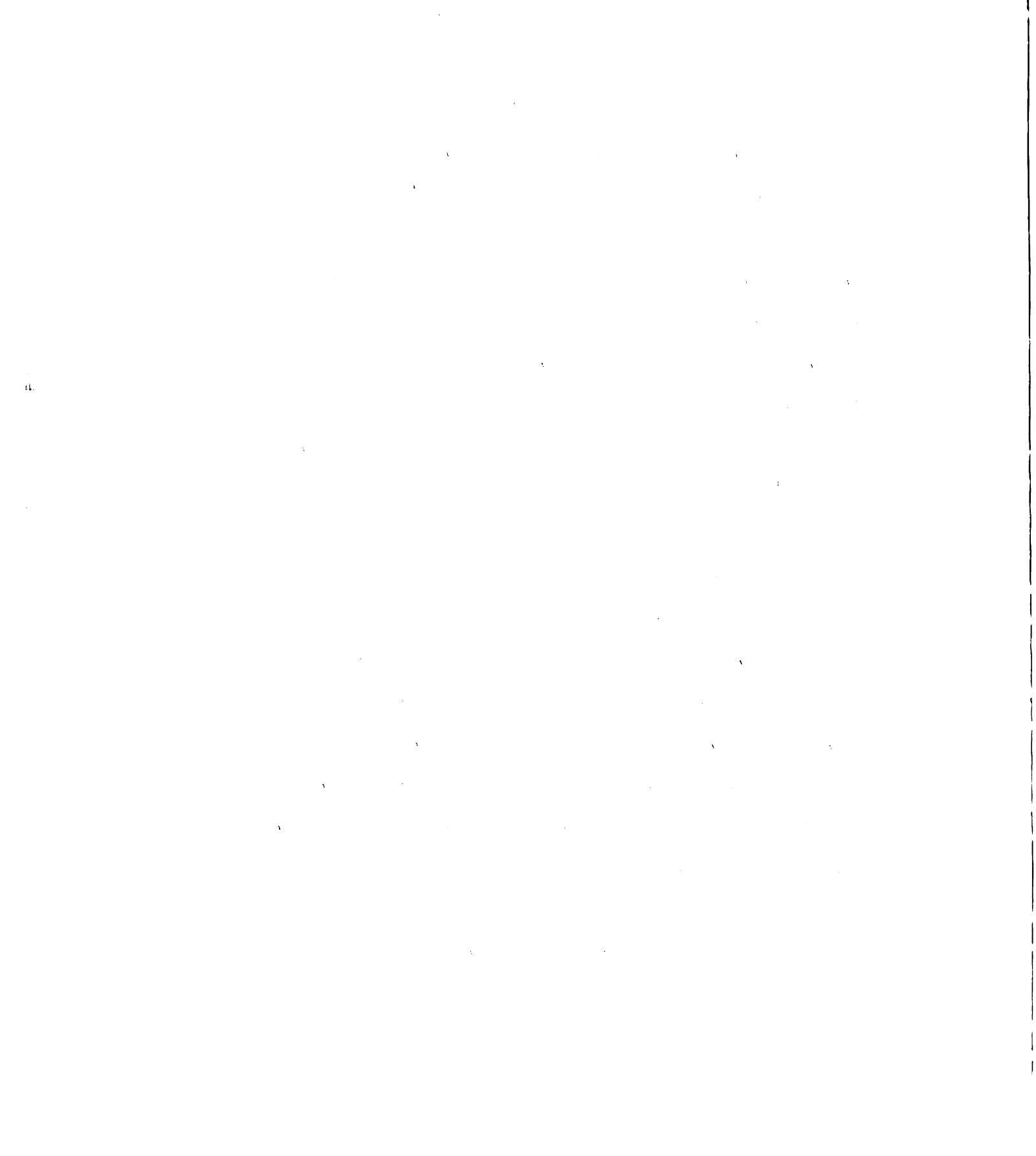
Jefferson was obviously faced with a perplexing dilemma. If he remained opposed to the acceptance of the French King's gift,

then Tolozan and Sequeville would suffer a loss of income. On the other hand, if he accepted the gift he would obviously be violating his own preconceived notions of constitutional propriety.⁵⁰ He chose the latter course. "As Tolozan and Sequeville are decided not to accept their present unless I accept mine," Jefferson wrote Short on January 24, 1791, "I must yield as theirs is their livelihood. Be so good then as to finish this matter by the usual exchange of presents in my behalf."⁵¹

Realizing that his choice constituted a departure from his usual strict adherence to constitutional principles and republican simplicity, Jefferson instructed Short to maintain the utmost degree of secrecy in this transaction. Presuming that the King's present would be his picture set in diamonds, Jefferson asked Short "to have these taken out of the case, and sell them at Paris, London, or Amsterdam, depositing the money in my account, where it will be ready to cover what shall have been given to Tolozan and Sequeville" Short was further instructed to send Jefferson the case, "be it picture, snuff box or what it will, by any conveyance but sealed and unknown, to the person who brings it and above all things, in regard to the conversion of the diamonds into money, be secret so as never to be suspected at court much less find its way into an English newspaper."⁵²

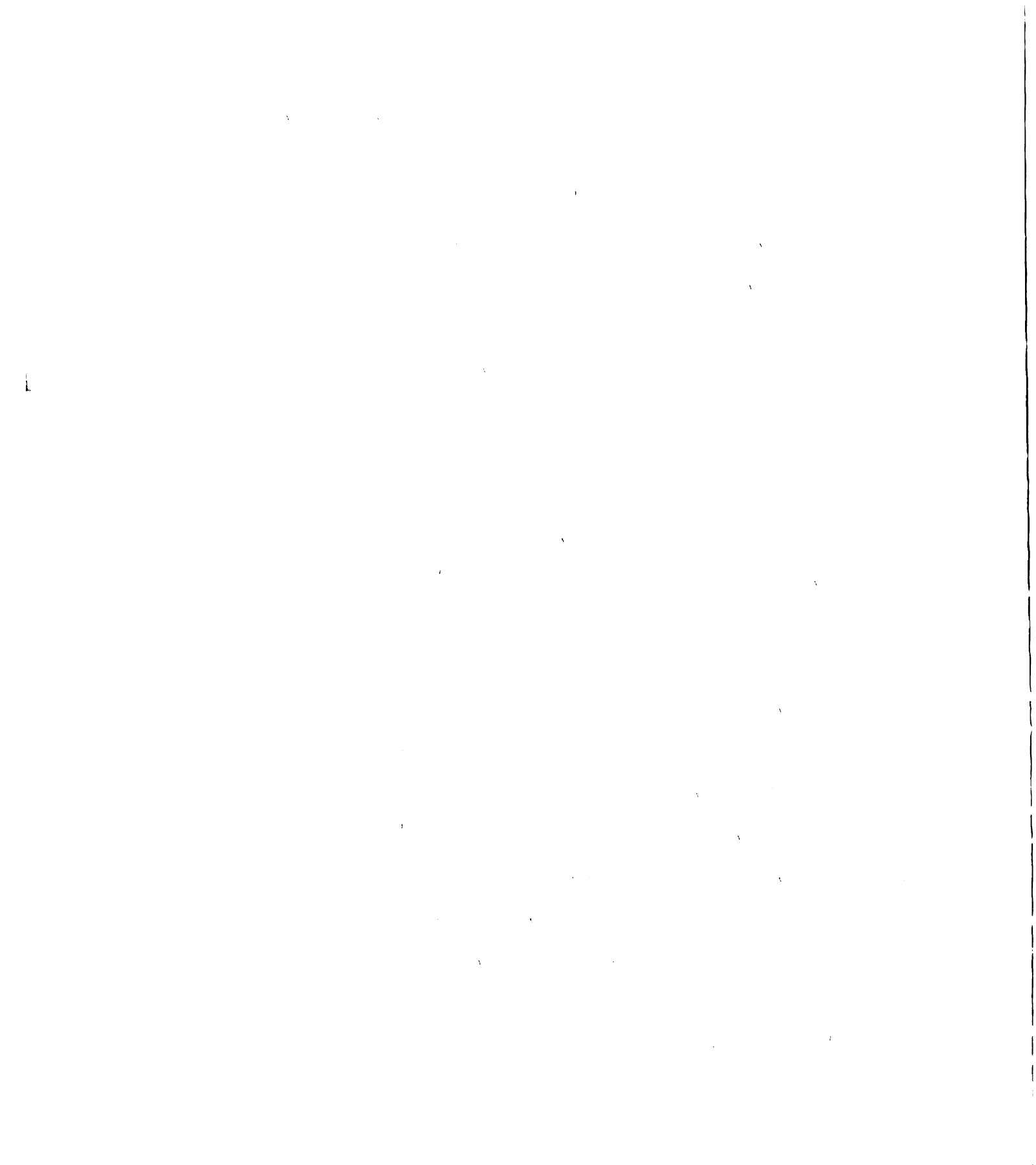
Short complied with Jefferson's wishes completely. The diamonds, once removed, were sold for 9,405 livres and this amount was accordingly credited to Jefferson's account. As the presents for Tolozan and Sequeville were together worth only 2,000 livres, Jefferson netted a fairly sizable profit from this transaction. The picture of Louis XVI was then forwarded by Short, through a trusted messenger, to Jefferson -- Short maintaining throughout that "the secrecy you requested is fully observed."⁵³ As Short was particularly discreet in this matter, Jefferson's acceptance and retention of the French gift was never publicly disclosed during his lifetime. So well-kept was the secret that no one apparently questioned the sincerity of Jefferson when he declared in 1808: "On coming into public office, I laid it down as a law of my conduct . . . to accept no present of any sensible pecuniary value. A pamphlet, a new book, or an article of a new curiosity, have produced no hesitation But things of sensible value, however innocently offered . . . may grow at length into abuse, for which I wish not to furnish a precedent."⁵⁴

The question still remains as to why Jefferson accepted and retained the French gift. In large part, he was humanly concerned with the livelihoods of Tolozan and Sequeville. He therefore felt somewhat obligated to accept the gift so that neither man



would suffer a loss of income. It does seem possible, however, that Jefferson may have been motivated by other reasons. In the period of time between Jefferson's initial decision to decline the gift (April 6, 1790) and his subsequent acceptance of it on January 24, 1791, the United States had initiated its own program of giving diplomatic gifts to foreign ministers. Since Jefferson was the chief architect of this American policy, it seems reasonable to believe that he may have been motivated to accept the French gift owing to the American decision to give reciprocal gifts to diplomats stationed in the United States.

According to Julian Boyd, editor of the Papers of Jefferson, there is reason to believe that Jefferson's letter of April 6 to Short may have been intercepted. Inasmuch as these instructions went out through various channels in duplicate and triplicate, Boyd maintains that "it is difficult to believe that this multiplied private letter did not come to the attention of the French government, perhaps to the eyes of the introducteur and the secretaire, and possibly to the French chargé d'affaires in New York, Louis Guillaume Otto."⁵⁵ Less than two weeks after despatching the instructions to Short, Otto wrote an unofficial and strictly confidential letter to Jefferson, in which he boldly suggested that the United States make some "marque de souvenir et d'estime" for the former French minister the Chevalier de la



Luzerne, who had returned to Europe two years earlier.⁵⁶ Whether or not Jefferson saw any connection between his own letter to Short and Otto's "suggestion" is a matter of conjecture. But it is interesting to observe that within ten days after receiving Otto's note Jefferson had completely formulated American policy in regard to the giving of diplomatic gifts.⁵⁷

Aside from consulting John Adams and John Jay,⁵⁸ Jefferson wrote to William Temple Franklin on April 20, 1790 to inquire as to the custom of European gift-giving in general and the experiences of his venerable grandfather in particular. "We are now making up our minds," Jefferson wrote, "as to the presents which it would be proper for us to give the diplomatic characters which take leave of us." He therefore asked Franklin to supply him with information in regard to "the form of the present they gave Dr. Franklin on his departure," as well as "any other information you can give me as to the distinction they make between different grades in their fairwell presents . . ."⁵⁹

Franklin immediately responded to Jefferson's request on April 27 with a detailed account of European gift-giving in general as well as the details concerning Benjamin Franklin's experiences in this regard.⁶⁰ With this and other information in hand, Jefferson proceeded to consult Washington⁶¹ and, once obtaining the President's approval on April 29, drew up an elaborate "Formula

for American Presents to Foreign Diplomats:"⁶²

Our Presents

To consist of a gold medal of 30. lines, the metal in which will be worth about 150. dollars and a gold chain of about 850. Doll. value, supposing the minister to have staid here 7. years.

Let the chain always have 365. links; and let each link be worth 3. dimes for every year they have staid.

Then	links	365
For 7. years, x 3 dimes = 21. dimes		<u>21</u>
		365
		<u>730</u>
		766.5
Medal		<u>150.</u>
		916.5

The links might be made worth more or less in cases of particular favor or disfavor.

Upon completing this formula, Jefferson wrote to William Short, who was still in France, explaining that "it has become necessary to determine on a present proper to be given to the Diplomatic Characters on their taking leave of us; and it is concluded that a medal and chain of Gold will be the most convenient." Short was therefore directed "to order the dies to be engraved with all the dispatch practicable." Jefferson further wrote that "the medal must be of 30 lines diameter, with a loop on the edge to receive the chain. On one side must be the Arms of the United States, of which I send you a written description and several impressions in wax to render that more intelligible, round them as a Legend must be 'the United States of America'." The design for the other side of the medal was left largely to the

discrimination of Short himself. Jefferson did suggest, however, that one possibility was "a Columbia (a fine female figure) delivering the emblems of peace and commerce to a Mercury, with the Legend 'Peace and Commerce' circumscribed, and the date of our Republic, to wit, IV Jul. MDCCLXXVI subscribed as an Exergum."⁶³ Short and Augustin Dupre, the French engraver commissioned to execute the dies, apparently felt that Jefferson's suggestion was more than satisfactory and therefore incorporated it for the obverse side of the diplomatic medal to the last detail.⁶⁴

Upon completion of the dies, Short was directed to have two gold medals prepared -- one for Luzerne and another for Luzerne's successor, the Comte de Moustier.⁶⁵ In addition to these two gold medals -- the only presentations ever made to foreign diplomats by the United States -- eight bronze copies were originally made, none of which, however, was ever presented.⁶⁶ Unfortunately, Luzerne, who was to have been the initial recipient of the American diplomatic gift, died before the medal had been completed,⁶⁷ although Short was able to deliver Moustier's medal as originally planned.⁶⁸ With the presentation of this gold token of esteem to Moustier, the short-lived American experiment in giving diplomatic gifts came abruptly to an end.

As no official (or unofficial) explanation was recorded at the time by any of the major participants, the exact reasons

which prompted the United States to terminate this policy remain largely a matter of speculation. Julian Boyd has written that the cessation of American diplomatic gift-giving may have been related to the activities of Citizen Edmund Genet, Moustier's successor, "for whom such a mark of esteem would have been unthinkable."⁶⁹ A more reasonable explanation, however, is that the Americans came to the realization that such a practice was at distinct variance with republican simplicity. Moreover, it became apparent that there was a serious inconsistency between giving diplomatic gifts on the one hand and refusing to allow American public servants to accept them from foreign nations on the other. Whatever the motivation, it seems clear that American republican simplicity in matters of diplomatic etiquette and protocol was measurably advanced during the early national period by the official attitude in regard to the giving and accepting of diplomatic gifts and emoluments.

¹John Quincy Adams to Richard Rush, November 6, 1817, in JQA Writings, VI, 246, and John Quincy Adams to Henry Middleton, June 7, 1820, in NA. MSS., Diplomatic Instructions of the Department of State, 1801-1906: All Countries, IX, reel 4, 15-16.

²John Quincy Adams to Richard Rush, November 6, 1817, in JQA Writings, VI, 246.

³John Quincy Adams to Henry Middleton, June 7, 1820, in NA. MSS., Instructions: All Countries, IX, reel 4, 15-16.

⁴William Temple Franklin to Thomas Jefferson, April 27, 1790, in Jefferson, Papers, XVI, 364.

⁵JQA Memoirs, III, 217.

⁶Rufus King to James Madison, June 27, 1804, in Rufus King, The Life and Correspondence of Rufus King, Comprising His Letters, Private and Official, His Public Documents and His Speeches, 6 vols., ed. Charles R. King (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1894-1900), IV, 378-79 and 379n.

⁷James Madison to Rufus King, July 13, 1804, in Ibid., 380.

⁸For testimony in regard to the inadequacies of American diplomatic salaries, see, for example, John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, February 8, 1810, in JQA Writings, III, 395-96; John Quincy Adams to James Monroe, July 12, 1816, in Ibid., VI, 52-53; John Quincy Adams to Richard Rush, May 29, 1818, in Ibid., VI, 339-40; JQA Memoirs, IV, 477; and Wharton, Diplomatic Correspondence of the American Revolution, IV, 180-81, 362-63, 767, and 846, VI, 328.

⁹JQA Memoirs, III, 528-29.

¹⁰Ibid., 528.

¹¹Max Farrand, ed., The Records of the Federal Convention of 1787, 3 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1911), II, 657.

¹²Ibid., 389.

¹³Ibid., III, 327.

¹⁴Ibid., II, 169 and 183.

¹⁵Ibid., II, 572 and 596.

¹⁶Jonathan Elliot, ed., The Debates in the Several State Conventions on the Adoption of the Federal Constitution, as Recommended by the General Convention at Philadelphia in 1787, 5 vols. (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1881), III, 483-86.

¹⁷Ibid., II, 407.

¹⁸See Samuel Flagg Bemis, Pinckney's Treaty: A Study of America's Advantage from Europe's Distress, 1783-1800 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1926).

¹⁹John W. Foster, The Practice of Diplomacy as Illustrated in the Foreign Relations of the United States (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1906), 145; see also Thomas Pinckney to Timothy Pickering, July 10, 1796, in NA. MSS., Despatches, Great Britain, III, reel 2, and Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, Life of General Thomas Pinckney (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1895), 175 ff.

²⁰Pinckney, Life of General Thomas Pinckney, 176-77, and Foster, Practice of Diplomacy, 145-46.

²¹Cited in Foster, Practice of Diplomacy, 146.

²²Thomas Jefferson, "Notes of Presents given to American Diplomats by Foreign Governments," in Jefferson, Papers, XVI, 366, and Barnabus Deane to Theodore Hopkins, February 25, 1790, in Silas Deane, et al. The Deane Papers, 5 vols., in Collections of the New York Historical Society for the Year 1890 (New York: New York Historical Society, 1891), V, 533.

²³William Temple Franklin to Thomas Jefferson, April 27, 1790, in Jefferson, Papers, XVI, 365.

²⁴Thomas Jefferson, "Notes," in Ibid., XVI, 366.

²⁵"Extract from the record of the resolutions of their High Mightinesses the Lords the State General of the United Netherlands," March 6, 1788, in Adams, Works, VIII, 482-83.

²⁶Arthur Lee to the President of Congress, October 17, 1780, in Wharton, Diplomatic Correspondence of the American Revolution, IV, 85-86.

²⁷Arthur Lee to the Committee of Foreign Affairs, January 19, 1780, in Ibid., III, 462.

²⁸Thomas Jefferson, "Notes," in Jefferson, Papers, XVI, 366.

²⁹Rufus King to James Madison, July 1803, in NA. MSS., Despatches, Great Britain, X, reel 8.

³⁰Monroe, Autobiography, 65.

³¹Richard Rush to John Quincy Adams, October 12, 1822, in NA. MSS., Despatches, Great Britain, XXVII, reel 23.

³²Richard Rush to John Quincy Adams, March 20, 1823, in Ibid., XXVIII, reel 24.

³³Rush, Memoranda, 380-81.

³⁴JQA Memoirs, IV, 14.

³⁵Ibid., II, 332.

³⁶Ibid., 333.

³⁷Ibid., 332-33.

³⁸Ibid., III, 527-29.

³⁹Ibid., 528. For further reference to Adams' attitude on this matter see, for example, John Quincy Adams to John Graham, May 31, 1817, in JQA Writings, VI, 184-85, and JQA Memoirs, III, 322-23.

⁴⁰John Quincy Adams, "Form of Personal Instructions," in Adams MSS., reel 439. For examples of similar directives to American ministers abroad by Adams, see, for example, John Quincy Adams to Richard Rush, November 6, 1817, in JQA Writings, VI, 246-47, and John Quincy Adams to Henry Middleton, June 7, 1820, in NA. MSS., Instructions: All Countries, IX, reel 4, 15-16.

⁴¹David Humphreys to Thomas Jefferson, January 1, 1803, in NA. MSS., Despatches from United States Ministers to Spain, V, reel 6; see also Frank Landon Humphreys, Life and Times of David Humphreys, 2 vols. (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1917), II, 304-307.

⁴²James Madison to David Humphreys, January 5, 1803, in Moore, Digest, IV, 579.

⁴³Charles Rhind to Andrew Jackson, December 10, 1830, in Register of Debates in Congress, VII, 21 Cong. 2 Sess., 782-83.

⁴⁴Andrew Jackson to the Congress of the U. S., February 22, 1831, in Andrew Jackson, Correspondence of Andrew Jackson, 7 vols., ed. John Spencer Bassett (Washington: Carnegie Institution, 1926-35), IV, 245.

⁴⁵Ibid., 245n.

⁴⁶Moore, Digest, IV, 581.

⁴⁷Cited in Ibid., 583; italics mine.

⁴⁸Thomas Jefferson to William Short, April 6, 1790, in Jefferson, Papers, XXI, 318.

⁴⁹William Short to Thomas Jefferson, June 29, 1790, in Ibid., 584-85.

⁵⁰See Thomas Jefferson to William Short, September 30, 1790, in Ibid., XVII, 544.

⁵¹Thomas Jefferson to William Short, January 24, 1791, Papers of Jefferson: William and Mary College (L.C. MSS., microcopy, reel 1). This letter of January 24 is not in the Library of Congress collection of Jefferson Papers complete. Only one page of the original four-page letter is represented in this collection (Jefferson

MSS., L.C., LXII, 10793). The remainder of the letter is preserved in the collection of Jefferson manuscripts housed at the College of William and Mary.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³William Short to Thomas Jefferson, May 2, 1791, in Jefferson, MSS., L.C., LXIII, 10980-10981. See also William Short to Thomas Jefferson, April 26, 1791, in Short MSS., L. C., XIV, 2455.

⁵⁴Thomas Jefferson to Samuel Hawkins, November 30, 1808, in Jefferson, Writings, XII, 203.

⁵⁵Editorial note: "Jefferson's Policy Concerning Presents to Foreign Diplomats," in Jefferson, Papers, XVI, 357. The following discussion of the brief American experiment in giving diplomatic gifts is based in large part upon this lengthy editorial note by Julian Boyd.

⁵⁶Louis G. Otto to Thomas Jefferson, April 20, 1790, cited in Ibid., 357.

⁵⁷Ibid., 359-60.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Thomas Jefferson to William Temple Franklin, April 20, 1790, in Jefferson, Papers, XVI, 363.

⁶⁰William Temple Franklin to Jefferson, April 27, 1790, in Ibid., 364-65.

⁶¹George Washington, The Diaries of George Washington, 1748-1799, 4 vols., ed. John C. Fitzpatrick (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1925), IV, 123.

⁶²Thomas Jefferson, "Formula for American Presents to Foreign Diplomats," in Jefferson, Papers, XVI, 367.

⁶³Thomas Jefferson to William Short, April 30, 1790, in Ibid., 396.

⁶⁴"The Diplomatic Medal of 1790," editorial preface in Ibid., xli - xlii.

⁶⁵Thomas Jefferson to William Short, March 8, 1791, in NA. MSS., Diplomatic and Consular Instructions of the Department of State, 1791-1801, I, reel 1, 6, and Thomas Jefferson to William Short, July 26, 1790, in Jefferson, Papers, XVII, 279-81.

⁶⁶"Diplomatic Medal of 1790," in Ibid., XVI, xli.

⁶⁷William Short to Thomas Jefferson, September 25, 1791, in Short MSS., L. C., XVII, 2944-45.

⁶⁸William Short to Thomas Jefferson, February 8, 1792, in Ibid., XIX, 3312.

⁶⁹Editorial note in Jefferson, Papers, XVI, 361.

CHAPTER FIVE

DECORUM RESTORED

The administrations of George Washington, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson had been characterized by a great deal of controversy and experimentation with respect to American diplomatic etiquette and protocol. Under Washington and Adams, formality in matters involving diplomatic etiquette and protocol had been emphasized, while extremes of informality were introduced during the Jeffersonian regime. In the years following the coming of James Madison to the presidency in 1809, this experimentation continued unabated. Nevertheless, a distinct leveling-off tendency can be discerned during the post-Jeffersonian era. What emerges, in effect, is a synthesis of formality and simplicity, strengthened by a liberal infusion of nationalism, in American diplomatic etiquette and protocol.

Handpicked by Jefferson for the presidency, James Madison won the election of 1808 handily, receiving 122 of a 175 electoral votes, and was easily re-elected in 1812. Despite his admiration for Jefferson and notwithstanding the fact that he had vigorously supported the President in his determination to resist the pretensions of the Merrys and Yrujos, Madison was wise enough to perceive that a continuation of Jeffersonian diplomatic

manners might ultimately prove detrimental to American interests both at home and abroad.

Madison believed that "it is proper that we should not be behind other nations either in civility or self respect."¹ In keeping with this belief, the new President restored the presidential levee which Jefferson had abandoned eight years earlier.² The reinstitution of the levee delighted not only the diplomatic corps, who could once again publicly parade in regal attire, but the townspeople as well. As the weekly presidential levee was opened to the general public, it was viewed by many as a welcomed diversion from the otherwise drab social life of the national capital. In fact, as one writer has pointed out, "it was the wheel on which life turned."³

Although the presidential levee was a useful device for keeping the diplomatic corps contented, it was nonetheless open to abuse. Owing to its democratic nature, the levee was often frequented by a heterogeneous assortment of "guests". Hack drivers, for example, after depositing their fares, were often prone to hitch their horses to the White House rail in order to partake of the refreshments themselves. On one such occasion, the President's pocket was picked, while on another "manpower had to be summoned to subdue a raucous domestic from one of the legations who had come to hobnob with society,"⁴

During the Madisonian era, levees were held every Wednesday evening while Congress was in session. Although in theory the President should have held the center of the stage at these affairs, in reality, he was overshadowed by his wife, Dolly. In fact, the Wednesday evening gatherings were soon dubbed "Mrs. Madison's levees" by the upper crust of Washington society.⁵ Madison himself seemed distinctly out of place at these gatherings. Small in stature, he often ran the risk of being completely overlooked by his guests. One observer remarked that the President "was in imminent danger of being confounded with the plebeian crowd, and was pushed and jostled about like a common citizen."⁶ Washington Irving made much the same observation in more vivid terms when he frequented one of the Wednesday evening levees:

In a few minutes I emerged from the dirt and darkness into the blazing splendor of Mrs. Madison's drawing-room. Here I was most graciously received; found a crowded collection of great and little men, of ugly old women and beautiful young ones, and in ten minutes was hand and glove with half the people in the assemblage. Mrs. Madison is a fine, portly, buxom dame, who has a smile and a pleasant word for everybody. Her sisters, Mrs. Cutts and Mrs. Washington, are like the two wives of Windsor; but as to Jemmy Madison -- ah poor Jemmy! -- he is but a withered apple-john.⁷

Notwithstanding his diminutive appearance and rather shy manners, however, the President did manage to please the

diplomatic corps by presenting a dignified contrast to the informal Jeffersonian example. Even as Secretary of State, Madison's manners had been far more pleasing to the diplomatic corps than had Jefferson's. Pichon, for example, had complained to Talleyrand "of the lack of dignity which makes Mr. Jefferson go on foot, on horse, without servants, and makes him receive . . . in an unseemly *négligé*, very often in slippers." On the other hand, Pichon continued, "the whole administration is not on this footing." Madison, he maintained, "lacks nothing of dignity."⁸

As President, Madison endeavored to maintain this dignity in his relations with the diplomatic corps. Remembering the negative effects which Jefferson's informality had occasioned, Madison decided to adopt a more dignified official approach, one which would be more in keeping with European etiquette. Accordingly, the rule of pell-mell was dropped. Henceforth, foreign ministers were to be shown the respect which befit their station. Unofficially, however, Madison retained much of the Jeffersonian heritage. Foreign ministers would continue to frequent the White House in an unofficial capacity at all hours of the day.⁹

The new official attitude was indicated with the reception by the President of the new British minister, Francis James

Jackson, who arrived at Washington on September 8, 1809.¹⁰

Upon Francis and Elizabeth Jackson's arrival at Norfolk a few days earlier, Madison had shown his desire to establish cordial relations with the new minister by directing that the Jacksons be transported up the Potomac in a government barge, thereby saving them time and money, as they had originally intended to travel via private packet.¹¹

While the official British ministerial residence was being renovated, the Jacksons took rooms at Washington's best inn. Unaccustomed to the relative social equality displayed in certain American quarters, the newcomers were flabbergasted when they learned that the hotel servants actually referred to the innkeeper and his wife as "the gentleman" and "the lady."¹² Instances such as this probably helped re-enforce the new minister's suspicion that he and Mrs. Jackson would most likely suffer the same fate at the presidential dinner table as Mr. and Mrs. Merry had six years earlier. Much to their surprise, the President had other plans. When they did dine with the Madisons early in October, the Jacksons were accorded every civility and courtesy which had previously been denied to the Merrys. Writing to the British foreign secretary, George Canning, on October 18, Jackson related that at this fête he and Mrs. Jackson had been "treated with a distinction not lately accorded

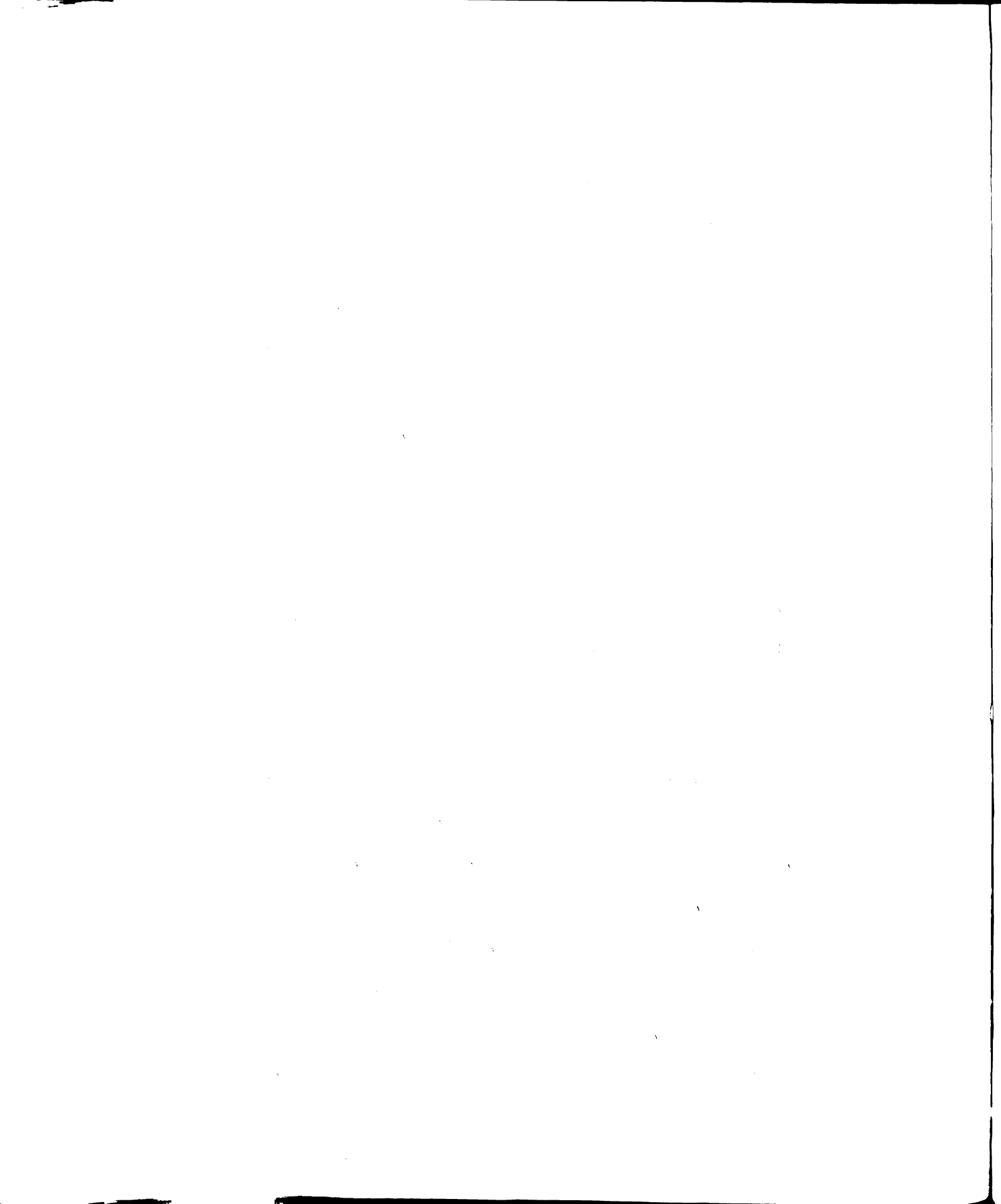
to a British minister." Choosing this occasion to settle that "foolish question of precedence," the British minister continued, Madison had given his arm to Mrs. Jackson and had taken her to the table, while Jackson himself took Dolly in. Indeed, Jackson concluded, "I do not know that I had ever more civility and attention shown me."¹³

Madison's decision to conciliate Jackson on this occasion was not entirely owing to his desire to replace Jefferson's system of pell-mell with a more polished variety of diplomatic etiquette. In fact, there is every reason to believe that his actions were motivated in large part by practical considerations. Great Britain and the United States were tottering near the brink of war. British infringements upon American neutral shipping rights were increasing at an alarming rate. Jackson's predecessor, David M. Erskine, had unsuccessfully attempted to negotiate the differences between the two nations. After his recall and Jackson's appointment to replace him, Madison remained determined to avoid a complete rupture with Great Britain. On this account, the President decided to conciliate the new minister as much as possible, hoping thereby to pave the way for serious negotiations between the two nations.¹⁴ That the President's actions were motivated by these practical considerations is indicated by his decision, early during his second

administration (when gestures of conciliation to Great Britain were no longer necessary), to codify and formalize American diplomatic etiquette and protocol.

Basing his decision upon the manner in which American diplomats had previously been received overseas, the President directed Secretary of State James Monroe to draft a set of rules regulating the relations between the American government and foreign ministers. Upon formulation, these rules were distributed to the diplomatic corps during the months of February and March 1814.

In an obvious reference to the unfortunate Merry episode, Secretary of State Monroe began his directive to the diplomatic corps by stating that since "some misunderstanding having taken place in former instances in the intercourse between the government of the United States and the Members of the Diplomatic Corps, it is proper that certain rules should be adopted to prevent the like in future." Such rules, the directive continued, are necessary in all governments, even those, like the United States, "which are most simple and make the least pretension." Perhaps most importantly, "in order to secure to the Ministers of the U. S. the respect which is due to their public Characters abroad, it is proper to establish at home at this time some Rules founded on principles universally acknowledged,



moderate and simple in their nature. A continued disregard of all forms in our Intercourse with foreign Nations may be imputed to the want of a just sensibility to our National Rights." The numerical increase in the diplomatic corps, Monroe added, necessitated the adoption of such rules.

American diplomatic etiquette and protocol would thereafter conform in large part to the established usages of European courts, especially in regard to diplomatic rank and precedence. In adopting these rules, Monroe had been guided by "the usage of European Governments in their intercourse with each other," as well as by the standards of European etiquette and protocol which American diplomatic representatives were expected to submit to during their respective tours of duty.

Following this introductory assertion of purpose, a rather lengthy "statement of the Rules practised in certain European Governments" was presented. Upon the delivery of his credentials in London, Paris, or St. Petersburg, it was explained, the foreign minister was expected to pay the first visit to all of the cabinet secretaries or national ministers. This procedure was to be repeated by the diplomat's wife, who was required to pay the first visit to the wives of the secretaries or national ministers. The cabinet secretaries and national ministers, moreover, only returned the visits of diplomats with ambassadorial rank. This

meant that the visits of American ministers, all of whom during this period were below the rank of ambassador, went unreturned. The wives of the ministers were similarly affected.

"In England," Monroe continued, "the Secretaries of the Government take rank of Foreign Ministers, as do all those distinguished persons who take rank of the Secretaries, such as the Sons of the King and collateral branches of his Family, the Lord Chancellor, the Chief Justice, the Speaker of the House of Commons, and others." Similarly, cabinet secretaries and national ministers at Paris and St. Petersburg invariably took precedence over the diplomatic corps.

Finally, the directive stipulated that "the Government of the United States adopts the rule of the European Governments, with this exception: that the Heads of Government return the first visit of Foreign Ministers, without regard to grade, and that their Wives return every visit."¹⁵ In other words, diplomats at Washington were henceforth expected to pay the first visit to every cabinet secretary, while their wives were expected to pay the first visit to the wives of the secretaries. These visits, irrespective of the rank of the foreign minister, were to be returned. Most significantly, American cabinet secretaries and their wives were to take precedence over members of the diplomatic corps and their wives at official governmental functions. No longer (theoretically

at least) would there be occasion for the mass confusion which attended the diplomatic dinners during the Jeffersonian regime. No longer could foreign ministers claim that they were being personally slighted by a government too backward to maintain even the rudiments of etiquette.

There does not seem to have been much reaction to these new rules of diplomatic etiquette and protocol. Andre de Daschkoff, the Russian minister, suggested that perhaps the visiting rule should depend upon who arrived first at the national capital -- diplomats or the cabinet secretaries.¹⁶ Monroe replied to Daschkoff explaining that "in the intercourse between the Secretaries and Attorney-General of this Government and the ministers of foreign powers the period of the arrival of either at the seat of Government is not considered. The first visit is expected from the foreign minister." The main reason for this rather inflexible rule, Monroe asserted, was that the foreign minister "should make himself known to the Government to which he is addressed, and that he should extend his visit to all the chief officers of that Government." In the event of a change in administration, the Secretary of State added, the foreign minister was also expected to make the first visit to all new cabinet secretaries.¹⁷

The only serious objection came from Sir Charles Bagot,

the new British minister. Bagot's criticism was not leveled directly at the new diplomatic rules themselves -- although he did believe that they were "drawn up solely in resentment of some neglect which Mr. Monroe conceived himself to have experienced in his representative character when in England." More objectionable, in Bagot's estimation, was the manner in which the new rules had been presented to him. Writing to Lord Castlereagh on April 12, 1816, Bagot complained that the diplomatic directive which he had received was "neither addressed to me nor signed, and, what is perhaps equally worthy of observation, that it differs materially from a paper purporting to have the same object, which was delivered to the foreign ministers here in the month of March, 1814." A comparison of the communique sent to the other foreign ministers, indicates that the British minister greatly exaggerated. Although the phraseology does indeed vary somewhat at several points, the two documents are essentially identical.¹⁸

Upon receiving the new rules, Bagot approached Secretary of State Monroe for an explanation. He wanted to know whether he should consider the directive as being official or unofficial. "I thought it desirable that he should be induced," Bagot wrote, "either by signing the paper and addressing it to me, to make it official, or to withdraw it altogether." Monroe, who was "evidently embarrassed by this proposal," hedged around and finally

told Bagot that the communique should be regarded as "unofficial," but that it certainly could not be withdrawn. Monroe conceded a point to Bagot, however, when he informed him shortly thereafter that President Madison had decided that "at the first dinner given by him to a foreign minister and his wife, they should be allowed precedence of the Ministers of State, upon a principle of hospitality; but that, upon all subsequent occasions, the Ministers of State and Members of the Senate would take precedence of them."¹⁹

The most significant aspect of Secretary of State Monroe's new rules was the provision providing that American cabinet secretaries and their wives were to take precedence over members of the diplomatic corps and their wives at official governmental functions. Throughout the remainder of the Madison regime, however, this provision was rarely enforced.²⁰ It appears that although the Secretary of State and his wife were indeed given precedence over the members of the diplomatic corps and their wives, the other cabinet members were generally relegated to a lesser station at presidential dinners and fêtes. This breach of the rules was apparently in part due to Madison's fear of completely alienating the diplomatic corps and probably in part due to the lack of an exact understanding of Secretary of State Monroe's directive. At any rate, it subsequently occasioned a great deal of controversy after Monroe himself became president in 1817.

Shortly after the commencement of the first Monroe administration, Secretary of State John Quincy Adams reported that "the other heads of Departments expect an entire equality with the Secretary of State, and would consider it as an offensive distinction in his favor if he should alone of them be invited to the diplomatic dinners."²¹ On the other hand, Adams maintained, although the diplomatic corps was quite willing to yield precedence to the Secretary of State at official presidential affairs, the foreign ministers would most likely have resisted being "thrown at the bottom of the table by postponement to four or five heads of Departments and their wives."²²

If Monroe implemented his own rules explicitly, he ran the risk of alienating the diplomatic corps. If, on the other hand, he chose to accord the diplomats precedence over the cabinet secretaries, he risked offending his own official family. In an attempt to avoid these difficulties, the President, acting upon the advice of Secretary of State Adams, decided to keep the two groups separated as much as possible. Accordingly, during the winter of 1818-1819, diplomats and cabinet members dined with the President on separate occasions.²³ At one such affair, the diplomatic corps shared the dinner table with the Navy Commissioners and "some respectable private inhabitants" of Washington.²⁴ That did not work out well either. Adams observed in his diary

that the foreign ministers "were not pleased at being invited with persons of inferior rank and private citizens, nor at the absence of the Secretary of State, with whom they had usually been associated on these occasions heretofore."²⁵

Once more Monroe approached Adams for advice. How could both groups be pacified without materially affecting the diplomatic rules established in 1814? The President and the Secretary of State decided to accommodate both parties by a mutually advantageous solution. At all future dinners held by the President for the diplomatic corps, only one cabinet member (chosen in rotation) would be invited. The cabinet member and his wife would take precedence over the diplomats and their wives, thereby satisfying what Adams called their pretensions to superiority. This arrangement was also deemed satisfactory by the diplomatic corps, whose chief fear had been the prospect of being horded together at the bottom of the presidential table.²⁶

Except for this slight equivocation, American diplomatic etiquette and protocol during the administrations of James Monroe and John Quincy Adams remained steadfastly upon its nationalistic course. At the same time, Monroe and Adams continued and even greatly accelerated the movement away from Jeffersonian simplicity which President Madison had already begun.

Upon taking office in 1817, Monroe expressed his desire

"to place the foreign Ministers here upon much the same footing as the American ministers were placed at European Courts, upon a footing of form and ceremony."²⁷ Under Jefferson and, to a lesser extent, Madison, foreign ministers had visited the White House whenever they pleased, and moreover, there had been much social intercourse between the President and the diplomatic corps. "They had heretofore visited the Presidents familiarly," John Quincy Adams wrote, "and called to take tea at their houses, as among individuals."²⁸ However, Monroe felt that such activities did not befit his station as the chief magistrate of a great nation. He believed that the relationship between the executive department and the diplomatic corps should be "reserved and formal."²⁹ Accordingly, he informed the foreign ministers that this familiar intercourse would no longer be tolerated. Although the diplomatic corps would still be welcome and properly received at presidential levees and drawing rooms and upon the occasion of formally requested appointments, no foreign minister would thereafter be received at the White House without a formal invitation.³⁰

This tendency to return to the more reserved and formal diplomatic etiquette and protocol as practiced under presidents Washington and Adams was reflected in a number of other ways during the administrations of Monroe and the younger Adams. Presidential dinners and levees were distinctly more formal than those

under Jefferson and Madison. Most contemporary accounts testify to the fact that presidential dinners were exceptionally formal and particularly dull during the Monroe regime. A New York congressman reported that he and his party had been ushered into the White House drawing room single-file prior to dining with the President. Upon entering the room, they discovered "two mute segments of a circle, the women seated near Mrs. Monroe, the men in a group by themselves."³¹ Having exchanged formal greetings with the President and his wife, the congressman's party proceeded to sit themselves in a row of chairs and awaited to be summoned to dinner in a state of absolute silence. "Everyone," wrote one observer, "looked as if the next moment would be his last."³² From their seats, the invitees "looked out as more victims were ushered in, and the ghastly ceremony was repeated over and over for an interminable half-hour until dinner was announced."³³

Although presidential dinners under Monroe were not exactly filled with gaiety, they were not entirely devoid of drama. On one occasion, for example, the President's guests were entertained by an episode between Sir Charles Vaughan, the British minister, and the Count de Serurier, the French minister. During the course of the meal, Vaughan had noticed that Serurier bit his thumb whenever he happened to make a remark. At length, Vaughan

demanded an explanation from the French minister. "Do you bite your thumb at me, Sir," the British representative asked. "I do," came the count's reply. Thereupon, both men promptly left the table and retired into the adjoining hallway. When Monroe, who had followed them out, came upon the two diplomats, their swords were already drawn and crossed. The President proceeded to throw up their weapons with his own dress sword, while a host of servants descended upon the two irate ministers. They were separated and sent home to cool off. The dinner was resumed and the two diplomats sent their formal apologies the following morning.³⁴

The same formality and stiffness that presided over presidential dinners also prevailed at the Wednesday evening levees, which Monroe and Adams had continued.³⁵ The only significant difference between the Monroe levees and the Adams levees, according to one contemporary, was that "the quality of the refreshments" served was far better under Adams than it had been under his predecessor.³⁶

Further illustrations of this renewed formality are numerous. In his initial reception of foreign ministers, for example, Monroe decided to employ "the usual forms practised by European sovereigns on similar occasions."³⁷ As Secretary of State, John Quincy Adams recorded in minute detail the exact ceremony as practiced by Monroe. The President, Adams explained, "receives

foreign ministers standing, dressed in a half-military uniform or a full suit of black. The Ministers are in full Court dresses. He stands in the centre of the drawing-room, and I accompany them, keeping the right hand." Upon the presentation of the diplomat's letter of credence, Adams continued, "the President hands it, unopened, to me." Furthermore, the chief executive "has a general answer to the short addresses which the Ministers make in the delivering of these letters . . . with very little variation adapted to each particular case. He makes no other conversation," and at that point the official audience is concluded.³⁸

Finally, an etiquette war, reminiscent of the squabble occasioned by Jefferson's system of pell-mell, was precipitated between the ladies of the first family and the wives of the foreign ministers. It had generally been the custom -- more out of courtesy than owing to any definite rule -- for the President's wife to pay the first visit to the wives of foreign ministers and even to the wives of new senators and representatives.³⁹ With Monroe's elevation to the presidency, this custom was relegated to obscurity. Elizabeth Kortright Monroe was a chronic invalid who could hardly have been expected to dash around Washington paying visits to all of the wives of foreign ministers and congressmen. On this account, Mrs. Monroe delegated this responsibility to her oldest daughter, Eliza Hay. Mrs. Hay, however, had no intention of visiting the

wives of foreign ministers or congressmen unless they made the first visit.⁴⁰ This infuriated the latter and caused, in the words of John Quincy Adams, a "senseless war" over etiquette. This squabble between the wives of foreign ministers and the White House soon broadened to engulf all of Washington society. Before long, the point at issue became whether senators or members of the cabinet held the higher office and were therefore entitled to receive the courtesy of a first visit. Throughout the remainder of Monroe's regime, these questions, which were never really settled, remained to enliven the otherwise tranquil pace of Potomac society.⁴¹

The return to a more formal and "dignified" approach to American diplomatic etiquette and protocol under Monroe and Adams was not made at the expense of republican simplicity. On the contrary, this distinctive quality of simplicity was now thoroughly engrained in the official relations between the United States and the diplomatic corps. Diplomats and other foreign observers would continue to remark (and complain) about the "differences" which existed between American and European manners. They would continue to lament the inconveniences and drabness of the national capital and perpetually complain about the heterogeneous assortment of citizens permitted to attend official presidential and governmental functions.⁴²

Stratford Canning, the British minister to the United

States from 1820 to 1823, never tired of criticizing American manners and living conditions. Shortly after Monroe's second inauguration, Canning wrote that "when we all attended the President's inauguration, in lace coats and silk stockings, [it] was a most wretched day of snow and mud and cold; and though we had received an invitation in form from the Secretary of State, we had a tremendous crowd of sturdy and ragged citizens to squeeze through on our way into the House of Representatives."⁴³ He also wrote his sister expressing his dissatisfaction with the national capital: "In the present imperfect state of this celebrated metropolis, the life of a foreigner at Washington must ever be one of privation and restraint. The city, for so I must call it, possesses neither the elegant resources of a large town, not the tranquil charms of the country."⁴⁴ The British minister's impression of Washington was echoed by another Englishman, Captain Basil Hall. Hall maintained that the national capital "looks as if some giant had scattered a box of his child's toys at random on the ground."⁴⁵ Then, in September 1821, Canning observed that "true republican virtues" had even found a "refuge" at the Department of State: "trousers, worsted stockings, and gaiters for winter, a white roundabout, i.e. a cotton jacket without skirts for summer wear, sans stockings, and sometimes

sans waistcoat," Canning discovered, was now standard wearing apparel.⁴⁶

The Wednesday evening levees continued to be frequented by a varied assortment of "guests" during the Monroe-Adams era. This social medley, according to one observer, usually consisted of "secretaries, senators, foreign ministers, parsons, priests, lawyers, judges, auctioneers, and nothingarians . . . all with their wives and some with their gawky offspring . . . some in shoes, most in boots and many in spurs; some snuffing others chewing and many longing for their cigars and whiskey at home, some with powdered heads, others frizzled and oiled, whose heads a comb has never touched, and which are half hid by dirty collars (reaching far above their ears) as stiff as pasteboard."⁴⁷ Even the chief executive exhibited a personal degree of republican simplicity which often amazed foreign ministers. Monroe "maintained his direct simplicity [and] his easily approachable mien,"⁴⁸ while Adams usually attended the levees "in a plain citizen's dress; and strangers would never distinguish him from others at his levees, if he was not pointed out to them."⁴⁹ One Englishman, having attended a presidential levee under Adams, found that "here was a degree of republican simplicity beyond what I should have expected."⁵⁰

The election of Andrew Jackson to the presidency in

1828 created a great deal of anxiety among the diplomatic corps. Carried into office by an unprecedented wave of popular support, Jackson and his followers were the logical inheritors of the Jeffersonian heritage⁵¹ and considered themselves, according to one historian, as being the guardians of that tradition.⁵² On this account, his victory in 1828 seemed portentiously ominous to the foreign ministers, who apparently feared that the new President might alter American diplomatic etiquette and protocol along the lines set down by Jefferson nearly three decades earlier. Martin Van Buren, the new Secretary of State, wrote that this anxiety had reached "panic" proportions between Jackson's election and his inauguration. "Naturally inclined, from causes that need not be stated, to side with the party least imbued with the democratic spirit of the Country," Van Buren reported, "the members of [the diplomatic corps] have been always predisposed to approach with distrust any Chief Magistrate elevated to power by that influence. The character of the canvass which resulted in the election of Gen. Jackson and the unprecedented extent to which the feelings of the masses of the People has been enlisted in his favor had added much strength to this bias."⁵³

The anxiety of the diplomatic corps was increased considerably immediately following Jackson's inauguration on March 4, 1829. Having delivered his inaugural address, the new President

walked from Capitol Hill to the White House to preside over a post-inaugural reception which had been prepared in his honor.⁵⁴ Following closely on his heels were the people -- "from the highest and most polished down to the most vulgar and gross in the nation," wrote Justice Joseph Story.⁵⁵ What followed, according to one observer, was "a regular Saturnalia."⁵⁶ "The Majesty of the People," reported Margaret Bayard Smith, who witnessed the whole affair, "had disappeared, and a rabble, a mob, of boys, negros, women, children, scrambling, fighting, romping" had quickly pushed itself into the White House. "Ladies and gentlemen only had been expected at this levee, not the people en masse," Mrs. Smith continued. "But it was the People's day, and the People's President and the People would rule."⁵⁷ Anxious to congratulate or even get a glimpse of Old Hickory and to partake of the cake, ice cream, and lemonade which had been prepared, the wild throng of citizens all but crushed Jackson to death before some friends were able to form a living barrier behind which he escaped through a back door. In the meantime, the crowd had reduced the White House reception rooms to a shambles. Imported damask upholstery was ruined, bowls of cut glass were shattered recklessly and several thousand dollars worth of fine china went under foot. Amid the confusion, someone had the presence of mind to carry several tubs of punch and

lemonade outside to the lawn, but even this created further disturbance. "Ladies fainted, men were seen with bloody noses and such a scene of confusion took place as is impossible to describe, -- those who got in could not get out by the door again, but had to scramble out of windows." Mrs. Smith wrote that the whole affair "brought to my mind descriptions I had read, of the mobs in the Tuileries and at Versailles."⁵⁸

This unprecedented incident merely added further gloom to the already perplexed diplomatic corps. Surely, the foreign ministers undoubtedly reasoned, the new President would quickly and summarily abolish levees and reinstitute pell-mell rules of etiquette. In fact, he would probably begin to receive foreign dignitaries in a state of slippered undress.

Secretary of State Martin Van Buren tried to reassure the diplomatic corps that their anticipations were groundless. Unable to convince them entirely, he arranged for a special meeting between the new President and all of the foreign ministers. Only in this way, Van Buren thought, could all misconceptions and apprehensions be put aside. Accordingly, Jackson met with the diplomats on April 6 and explained that he had no intention of radically departing from his predecessor's foreign policy or his relationship with the diplomatic corps. "The simple yet kindly old-school manners of the host with the amicable assurances of

his address and the unexceptionable quality of his banquet," according to Van Buren, "made the most favorable impressions upon the guests which they took no pains to conceal, and thus the anxieties of these gentlemen were completely relieved and their prejudices materially softened by the most approved diplomatic machinery."⁵⁹

¹James Madison to Rufus King, December 18, 1803, in King, Life and Correspondence, IV, 334.

²The presidential "levee" should not be confused with the so-called "secretarial salon" which also came into being during the Madison regime. Whereas the levee was open to the general public, the salon was a restricted and much more informal grouping of invited private guests. According to James Sterling Young's recent political and administrative study of The Washington Community, the salon included "an executive's intimate or close acquaintances, as distinguished from the much larger number with whom his family maintained relationships of courtesy." For further details see Young, The Washington Community, 224-27.

³Furman, White House Profile, 57.

⁴Young, The Washington Community, 170-71.

⁵Anthony, Dolly Madison, 196.

⁶Cited in Wharton, Salons, 203.

⁷Cited in Anthony, Dolly Madison, 197.

⁸Pichon to Tallyrand, February 24, 1802, cited in Brant, Madison, IV, 85.

⁹JQA Memoirs, IV, 295 and 16-18.

¹⁰Bindoff, British Diplomatic Representatives, 186.

¹¹Francis Wharton, A Digest of the International Law of the United States, 3 vols., in Senate Misc. Document 162, 49 Cong. 1 Sess. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1886), I, 718.

¹²Brant, Madison, V, 86. The surprise displayed by the Jackson's was not unusual for the European traveller in America. In fact, as Jane Louise Mesick has written, this spirit of equality was perhaps the most predominant characteristic observed by Europeans during their visits to America. "It was forced upon him at the public dining table as well as in whatever private

social life he enjoyed, and in all his intercourse with those whom he would naturally have considered his inferiors." See Jane Louise Mesick, The English Traveller in America (New York: Columbia University Press, 1922), 64-66.

¹³ Francis James Jackson to George Canning, October 18, 1809, and Francis James Jackson to G. Jackson, October 24, 1809, cited in Brant, Madison, V, 93.

¹⁴ Wharton, Digest, I, 718.

¹⁵ Copy of a letter delivered to M. de Kantzou, Swedish minister to the United States, March 2, 1816, enclosed in Charles Bagot to Lord Castlereagh, April 6, 1816, F.O.5/114/1 (photostat in the author's files). See also, "Informal Paper transmitted to Mr. Serurier, May 5, 1814," in NA. MSS., Notes from the Department of State to Foreign Ministers and Consuls in the United States, 1793-1834, II, reel 2.

¹⁶ Andre de Daschkoff to James Monroe, February 24, 1813, in NA. MSS., Notes, reel 2.

¹⁷ James Monroe to Andre de Daschkoff, March 9, 1813, in Ibid.

¹⁸ Charles Bagot to Lord Castlereagh, April 6, 1816, F.O.5/114/1, and enclosures (photostats in author's files).

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ That Monroe's rules were not strictly enforced in this respect is clearly implied in JQA Memoirs, IV, 17 ff. and 295 ff.

²¹ Ibid., IV, 295-96.

²² Ibid., 296.

²³ Ibid., 34.

²⁴ Ibid., 296.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., 17.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid., 17 and 295.

³¹Helen Nicolay, Our Capital on the Potomac (New York: The Century Company, 1924), 135.

³²Cited in Cresson, James Monroe, 364.

³³Nicolay, Our Capital, 135.

³⁴Cresson, James Monroe, 364-65.

³⁵Ibid., 368, and Nicolay, Our Capital, 135.

³⁶Benjamin Perley Poore, Perley's Reminiscences of Sixty Years in the National Metropolis, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Hubbard Brothers, 1886), I, 31.

³⁷JQA Memoirs, IV, 314.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Cresson, James Monroe, 360-61.

⁴⁰Ibid., 359-60.

⁴¹The entire controversy is minutely described in JQA Memoirs, IV, 479 ff.

⁴²Another problem that confronted (and irritated) foreign ministers was the unwillingness of American servants to wear livery. On this, see Harriet Martineau, Retrospect of Western Travel, 2 vols. (London: Saunders and Otley, 1838), I, 151.

⁴³Stratford Canning to Joseph Planta, March 8, 1821, cited in Lane-Poole, Life of Canning, I, 318.

⁴⁴Stratford Canning to his sister, April 24, 1821, cited in Ibid., 321.

⁴⁵Captain Basil Hall, Travels in North America in the Years 1827 and 1828, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: Cadell and Company, 1829), III, 1.

⁴⁶ Stratford Canning to George Canning, September 29, 1821, cited in Lane-Poole, Life of Canning, I, 305.

⁴⁷ Cited in Cresson, James Monroe, 369.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 370.

⁴⁹ E. Cooley, M. D., A Description of the Etiquette at Washington City, Exhibiting the Habits and Customs that Prevail in the Intercourse of the most Distinguished and Fashionable Society at that Place, During the Session of Congress (Philadelphia: L. B. Clark, 1829), 13.

⁵⁰ Hall, Travels, III, 14. For further illustrations of republican simplicity during this era, see Baron Axel Klinkowstrom, "In Monroe's Administration: The Letters of Baron Axel Klinkowstrom," in The American-Scandinavian Review, XIX, No. 7 (July 1931), 393-402.

⁵¹ Glyndon G. Van Deusen, The Jacksonian Era, 1828-1848 (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 29.

⁵² Marvin Meyers, The Jacksonian Persuasion, Politics and Belief (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966), 16-32.

⁵³ Martin Van Buren, Autobiography, in American Historical Association, Annual Report, 1918, II, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1920), 260-61.

⁵⁴ Margaret Bayard Smith commented that Jackson's walking to and from the ceremony was really going beyond the call of duty: ". . . yet I like the General for his avoidance of all parade -- It is true greatness, which needs not the aid of ornament and pomp -- and delicacy too -- I think the suppression of military attendance -- but I really think the good old gentleman might indulge himself with a carriage" Smith, Washington Society, 284-85.

⁵⁵ Cited in Van Deusen, Jacksonian Era, 31.

⁵⁶ James Hamilton, Jr. to Martin Van Buren, March 5, 1829, in Van Buren MSS., series 2, reel 7.

⁵⁷ Smith, Washington Society, 295-96.

⁵⁸Ibid., 295-97.

⁵⁹Van Buren, Autobiography, 260-62.

CHAPTER SIX

DIPLOMATIC PLUMAGE

The American desire to create a distinctive brand of diplomatic etiquette and protocol during the early national period was constantly vexed by questions concerning diplomatic dress and costume. European etiquette dictated that foreign ministers and diplomats should show respect to the several monarchies by dressing in a civil and dignified manner whenever attending court functions. This rule resulted in the institutionalization of the diplomatic costume throughout Europe during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

From the founding of the republic in 1789 until well into the decade preceding the Civil War, the problem of how American ministers and diplomats abroad should attire themselves preoccupied the minds of many men. Although attitudes in regard to the exact style of American diplomatic costumes fluctuated greatly and although presidential and State Department directives concerning diplomatic dress varied considerably throughout this period, one common theme emerges. The Americans were a new breed of men, specially ordained by their Creator to carve a new nation out of the wilderness and their representatives abroad should dress in a manner which would reflect the American qualities of republicanism and simplicity.

Agreeing with Crèvecoeur, who wrote as early as 1782 that the American "is a new man, who acts upon new principles,"¹ most Americans also shared Washington's view that "a plain genteel dress is more admired and obtains more credit than lace and embroidery in the Eyes of the judicious and sensible."²

The question of what to wear and what not to wear seems to have perplexed most American diplomatic agents abroad during the early national period. James A. Bayard reported from his London post that he had "several times felt embarrassment, upon the point of Etiquette as to dress,"³ while Gouverneur Morris had even felt obliged to request special permission from the French minister of foreign affairs in 1792 to appear before the King "without a sword, because of my wooden leg."⁴ John Quincy Adams wrote from London that diplomatic costume etiquette was "one of those affairs insignificant elsewhere, but of great importance at Courts." He observed that "there are occasions upon which full dress is indispensable, and others where it is disused. The line of distinction is not clear in this country, and there is always an awkwardness in finding oneself differently garbed from the rest of the company."⁵

Several decades later, one of Adams's successors at the Court of St. James, Edward Everett, was to find that there was indeed a certain awkwardness in discovering "oneself differently

garbed from the rest of the company." Upon his arrival in Great Britain in 1841, Everett was informed that Queen Victoria would receive his credentials on December 16. Having previously ascertained that the Court was in mourning for the dowager Queen of Bavaria, Everett made a special effort to procure a black court costume for the occasion of his audience with Victoria. When he arrived at Windsor Castle, however, he "was a little struck to see the Neapolitan Ambassador, the Prince Castelcicala, who was at the castle on the same errand as myself, with a white vest and white gloves." Castelcicala explained to the surprised American minister that the court had suspended mourning on that day to do honor to the birthday of the Belgian King. "I looked at my gloves," Everett later wrote, "unredeemed even by a white stitch, with dismay. The ladies were in white; the men in their scarlet uniforms, while I stood among them as inky as Hamlet." Much to his apparent relief, however, he "soon saw that every one perceived the cause of my dusky uniform and seemed at some pains to put me at ease by being at ease themselves."⁶

Problems in regard to diplomatic dress loomed large for Everett throughout the remainder of his mission. In 1843, for example, Thurlow Weed, a leading Whig politician and strategist who was travelling in Europe, wrote an article which appeared in the Albany Journal alleging that Everett's manner of dress was

decisively repugnant to American republican simplicity. "I observed our Minister, Hon. Mr. Everett, with his daughter, in a bright yellow coach, with coachmen and outriders in rich livery, and Mr. Everett himself (instead of the plain republican garb with which Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and John Jay used to appear on such occasions) in full Court dress, with gold and embroidery." Weed further maintained that "I don't half like this departure from the simplicity which distinguishes our form of government, though it is certain that the American Minister has acquired great popularity here, and perhaps augments his influence by his conformity in matters of displays and etiquette."⁷ When Everett learned of these allegations, he wrote to his friend Robert C. Winthrop explaining that Weed's observations were "greatly exaggerated." He pointed out that yellow was "a favorite color here for carriages," and that his coachman and footman "were in a very plain dress livery; as plain a one as was to be seen in the procession." In regard to his wearing apparel, Everett declared that "my coat was rather less ornamented than that of my secretary, and was certainly the very plainest dress in the diplomatic box."⁸

That Weed's observations were "greatly exaggerated" there can be no doubt. Weed himself later confessed that the article was composed partly in revenge for what he had considered "a slight and coldness on Mr. Everett's part."⁹ Furthermore, Weed had also made

the all too common error of assuming that Benjamin Franklin had dressed in "republican garb" throughout the duration of his mission to the French court from 1776 to 1785.

In reality, the manner in which Franklin presented himself at the French court has been and will continue to be a matter of conjecture. It is well known that Franklin's daily dressing habits in France were relatively simple. One French writer during Franklin's mission maintained that the "minister was usually dressed in a coat of chestnut-colored cloth, without any embroidery. He wore his hair without dressing it, used large spectacles, and carried in his hand a white staff of crab-apple stock."¹⁰ Franklin himself confirmed the accuracy of this statement when he described his appearance in France to a friend in 1777: "Figure me in your mind as jolly as formerly, and as strong and hearty, only a few years older; very plainly dressed, wearing my thin, gray straight hair, that peeps out under my only coiffure, a fine fur cap, which comes down my forehead almost to my spectacles. Think how this must appear among the powdered heads of Paris!"¹¹

In regard to the exact nature of the clothing Franklin wore at official court functions, however, no definitive statement can be made. When he was initially presented to the King, one observer recorded that "Franklin wore a dress of reddish-brown velvet, white hose, his hair hanging loose, his spectacles on his nose, and a

white hat under his arm."¹² Another contemporary observer remarked that the venerable Franklin "appeared at court in the dress of an American cultivator. His straight, unpowdered hair, his round hat, his brown coat, formed a contrast with the laced and embroidered coats, and the powdered and perfumed heads of the courtiers of Versailles."¹³ On subsequent court appearances, however, Franklin seems to have forsaken his simple brown jacket in order to conform to the prevailing usage in regard to diplomatic dress. One contemporary maintained that during the ceremony of signing the Franco-American treaty of 1778, Franklin wore a "suit of spotted Manchester velvet,"¹⁴ while another described Franklin as being "dressed in a suit of plain black velvet, with the usual snowy ruffles at wrist and bosom, white silk stockings and silver buckles, but without the usual chapeau and sword. He went without a wig, it is said, because the one made by the perruquier did not fit his large head."¹⁵ Further evidence that Franklin conformed to European usage in this respect is seen in the fact that he had a life-size portrait of himself executed, still extant, in which he appears in a blue silk court costume, embroidered with gold, and wearing a wig.¹⁶

Franklin's apparent conformity to European standards of diplomatic dress during the latter part of his mission is not especially surprising. Most American ministers during the early years

of the republic were to find that their effectiveness as diplomats was greatly enhanced by conforming at least in part to European diplomatic etiquette and protocol. But in most cases this conformity was not only half-hearted but also repugnant to the individual ministers involved. When John Adams, for example, learned that British etiquette dictated that he must appear before the King in "new clothes" and "very rich ones" at that, he was slightly irritated at the prospect of purchasing the appropriate diplomatic wardrobe.¹⁷ Theoretically, of course, Adams and his fellow ministers might have refused to conform to this European practice owing to the fact that the American government had not prescribed an official course to follow in regard to diplomatic dress. Matters involving court dress were largely left to the discretion of the individual diplomats during the initial years of the nation's existence.

The first official directive concerning the manner in which American representatives abroad should attire themselves came on August 26, 1790 and was directed to American consuls and vice-consuls. Secretary of State Jefferson advised that "the Consuls and Vice-Consuls of the United States are free to wear the uniform of their navy, if they chuse to do so." Jefferson explained that the particular uniform to which he was referring to was "a deep blue coat with red facings, lining and cuffs, the cuffs slashed and a

standing collar; a red waistcoat (laced or not at the election of the wearer) and blue Breeches; yellow buttons with a foul anchor, and black cockades and small swords."¹⁸

When John Quincy Adams, who was in Berlin, learned of Jefferson's directive to American consular officials, he wrote to his father that "it would be a convenience to give a similar authority to American diplomatic agents." He reasoned that it "would save them much useless expense, which they can very ill afford, and enable them to appear without censure in a manner more conformable to republican simplicity, than in the court dresses which they are now obliged to use." Adams pointed out that most of the European governments prescribed special uniforms for their diplomats and that it might be wise for the American government to do likewise. He advocated "the use of an uniform more simple and differing only by an appropriate color from a common daily dress. The substitution of common broadcloth instead of silks and velvets, and lace embroidery, and all the finery of children, which a necessary attendance at courts requires, would I presume be agreeable to every American who now undergoes these metamorphoses." The essence of the American costume, according to Adams, should be simplicity, thereby having "the advantage of designating a character which should not be confounded with every tribe of courtly butterflies in Europe."¹⁹

Nothing appears to have been done with respect to prescribing an official diplomatic costume for American ministers, however, until the administration of James Madison. Secretary of State James Monroe wrote on April 23, 1813 that "I shall, with the approbation of the President, prescribe an uniform for our ministers abroad, which while it will give a national character, and make a good appearance, will comport with our system of economy."²⁰ Monroe subsequently decided upon a diplomatic jacket "of blue Cloth, lined with Silk, either white or buff, standing Collar and Single breasted. The collar, cuffs, buttonholes and Pocket flaps embroidered, either with gold or silver, and the buttons to correspond, (if by rule a correspondence is necessary) if not, to be either white or yellow"²¹

It appears that the only American ministers to be immediately affected by Monroe's directive were Albert Gallatin, the Secretary of the Treasury, and Senator James A. Bayard of Delaware, who were sent in 1813 to St. Petersburg as special plenipotentiaries to join with John Quincy Adams in negotiating peace with Great Britain under Russian mediation.²² Bayard later recorded in his diary that the diplomatic costumes were first worn at an official dinner given by the Russian Chancellor in September 1813. "They appeared sufficiently fine for republicans and especially without comparison with others but they were quite plain when

they came alongside of the Chancellor's guests who were invited for the day."²³

When the British government finally agreed to negotiate with the Americans, they expressly refused to entertain any notions of Russian mediation. As Samuel Flagg Bemis has written, the English were "unwilling to submit such issues as impressment and blockade to the mediation of a sovereign who had proclaimed to the world the principles of the Armed Neutralities of 1780 and 1800."²⁴ On this account, Adams, Bayard, and Gallatin travelled to Ghent, where they were joined by Henry Clay, in order to negotiate the end of the War of 1812 with the British. It was during the negotiations which ultimately led to the Treaty of Ghent (1814) that the American representatives donned their diplomatic costumes for a second time.²⁵ Sir Amedee Forestier's famous painting of "The Signing of the Treaty of Ghent" reveals that the American costumes were relatively simple, at least when compared to the courtly costumes worn by British Chief Plenipotentiary Admiral Lord Gambier and his staff.²⁶

The American diplomatic costume authorized for the Ghent mission was the model for the subsequent State Department directive of November 6, 1817, which stipulated that American ministers abroad should procure

A blue coat, lined with white silk; straight standing

cape, embroidered with gold, single-breasted, straight or round buttonholes, slightly embroidered. Buttons plain, or, if they can be had, with the artillerists' eagle stamped upon them, i.e., an eagle flying, with a wreath in its mouth, grasping lightning in one of its talons. Cuffs embroidered in the manner of the cape; white cassimere breeches; gold knee buckles; white silk stockings; and gold or gilt shoe buckles. A three-cornered chapeau-bras, not so large as those used by the French, nor so small as those of the English. A black cockade, to which lately an eagle has been attached. Sword, etc., corresponding.

According to the directive, this costume was to be known as the "small uniform." It was to be worn "upon occasions of ordinary levees, drawing rooms, and diplomatic circles." But "on what are called gala days, such as birthdays of the sovereign, marriages of princes of his family, and other extraordinary occasions," the American ministers were expected to wear their "great uniforms." This costume consisted of the same type coat employed as the usual or small uniform, "but embroidered round the shirts and down the breasts as well as at the cuffs and cape" Moreover, there "should be a white ostrich feather, or plumet, in the minister's hat, not standing erect, but sewed round the brim."²⁷

These rather elaborate specifications were maintained throughout the administrations of James Monroe and John Quincy Adams. During the latter part of the Adams regime, however, friends of republican simplicity began protesting what they considered an affront to American principles. Foremost in this regard was future

President James Buchanan, who was at this time serving in the House of Representatives. In a rather lengthy speech on February 4, 1828, Buchanan maintained that American habits and manners "ought to be congenial to the simplicity and dignity of our institutions." In this regard, he bitterly condemned the court costume adopted under Monroe and continued by Adams. "No gentleman, who valued his standing with the People of this country, would ever appear before them in such a garb. The People of the United States do not even know that such a dress has been prescribed for their Ministers abroad." Furthermore, Buchanan argued that fanciful court attire was really detrimental to the image of America overseas. "Among men of sense abroad," he said, "our ministers, attired in the style of country gentlemen, would be more respectable, and more respected, than if they were bedizened in all the colors of the rainbow. In every attempt to ape the splendor of the representatives of monarchical Governments, we must fail." He pointed out that even at the height of their Empire, the Romans never made an attempt "to vie with the splendor of the Asiatic despots whom they subdued." Quite to the contrary, they dressed their ambassadors and ministers in the simple garb of Roman citizens. This, Buchanan maintained, should be the American practice. "Imagine to yourself," he asked his colleagues in the House, "a grave and venerable statesman,

who never attended a militia training in his life, but who has been elevated to the station of a foreign Minister, in consequence of his civil attainments, appearing at court, arrayed in this military coat, with a chapeau under his arm, and a small sword dangling at his side! Is not such a man compelled, by conforming to this regulation, to render himself ridiculous?"²⁸

Although Buchanan was to wait over twenty years for the transformation he envisaged, the elevation of Andrew Jackson to the presidency in 1829 did bring some relief to advocates of republican simplicity in respect to diplomatic dress. Jackson, like Buchanan, objected to the "extremely ostentatious" diplomatic costume which the Monroe and Adams administrations had prescribed for American foreign ministers. In addition to feeling that the costumes were ostentatious, Jackson also complained of the relative expense of outfitting American diplomats in such splendid regalia. On May 18, 1829, therefore, he directed Secretary of State Martin Van Buren to abrogate the Monroe-Adams directive. But realizing that "as it is considered necessary that our ministers should be distinguished by their dress while at Foreign courts from unofficial personages," Jackson informed Van Buren that "I am willing to prescribe one which shall conform to the simplicity of our government founded upon, and guided as it is, by pure republican principles."²⁹

Accordingly, the President and the Secretary of State

devised an appropriate costume which would be "recommended as well by its comparative cheapness as by its adaptation to the simplicity of our institutions." Henceforth, American diplomats were expected to wear "a black coat, with a gold star on each side of the collar near its termination; the under clothes to be black or white, at the option of the wearer; a three-cornered chapeau de bras, with a black cockade and gold eagle; and a steel-mounted sword with white scabbard."³⁰

The Jackson administration's decision to alter American diplomatic dress was not greeted with enthusiasm in every quarter. Some American ministers abroad opposed the Jacksonian emphasis on diplomatic simplicity. Shortly after Van Buren had issued his directive, William C. Rives, United States minister to France, wrote to the Secretary of State explaining that among American diplomats "opinions are divided as to the propriety of making any change whatever." Furthermore, "all seem to be agreed that there is a want of fitness and harmony in the details of the costume which has been prescribed." Among other things, Rives maintained, "it is thought that a black coat will not admit of the golden ornaments prescribed for the collar, and that there would be a striking want of harmony between the sword and a black coat." Rives advised that a more appropriate diplomatic costume would consist of a double-breasted blue jacket with a standing collar and shirts lined

with white silk.³¹ Jackson and Van Buren were not to be budged from their position, however. Van Buren subsequently wrote Rives indicating that although "there will always be some who will carp at changes which simplify the concerns of this life," it was thought best to "leave matters as they stand."³²

This Jacksonian modification remained part of American diplomatic instructions until the administration of Franklin Pierce (1853-57).³³ Pierce was a strong Jacksonian democrat and his foreign policy, according to his biographer Roy Nichols, "sought to preach democracy and defy monarchy." The Pierce administration not only "spread the propaganda for democracy," but also sought "to proclaim America's mission to the world" in no uncertain terms.³⁴ Pierce's Secretary of State, William L. Marcy of New York, was an equally devoted democrat. Owing to the efforts of these two men, American diplomatic costume etiquette was drastically revolutionized along democratic lines in 1853. On June 1 of that year, Marcy issued his monumental costume circular to American diplomatic representatives abroad.

According to Marcy's lengthy directive, the American minister overseas "will conform, as far as is consistent with a just sense of his devotion to republican institutions, to the customs of the country wherein he is to reside." But the Department of State "would encourage as far as practicable, without impairing his

usefulness to his country, his appearance at court in the simple dress of an American citizen." Not so naive as to believe that his directive would be viewed favorably by every European nation, Marcy further stipulated that "should there be cases where this cannot be done, owing to the character of the foreign government, without detriment to the public interest, the nearest approach to it compatible with the due performance of his duties is earnestly recommended." Marcy then mentioned the principle of simplicity which he asserted was established by Benjamin Franklin in the early years of the republic. "It is to be regretted," he maintained, "that there was ever any departure in this respect from the example of Dr. Franklin." The Secretary of State explained that it was the purpose of the United States to ensure friendly relations with all nations, and that this "we believe can be effectually done without requiring our diplomatic agents abroad to depart in this respect from what is suited to the general sentiments of our fellow citizens at home." In conclusion, Marcy affirmed that "all instructions in regard to what is called diplomatic uniform, or court dress, being withdrawn, each of our representatives in other countries will be left to regulate this matter according to his own sense of propriety, and with a due respect to the views of his government as herein expressed."³⁵

According to the Secretary of State's biographer, Ivor

D. Spencer, the diplomatic costume circular was not Marcy's brainchild. Apparently, the chief architect of this program was Ambrose Dudley Mann, the assistant Secretary of State.³⁶ But, as Spencer himself confesses, this is really somewhat beside the point inasmuch as the directive was sent out under Marcy's signature and he alone assumed responsibility for it. Moreover, regardless of exact authorship, the circular did express Marcy's own personal views beyond doubt. The Secretary of State had always disapproved of the way in which foreign (and some American) diplomats had dressed. In 1841, for example, he had attended a diplomatic dinner given by President John Tyler. He later described his reaction to the fanciful manner in which the diplomatic corps had been attired. "The diplomats decked out in gew-gaws," he observed, "made a truly ridiculous appearance."³⁷

The reaction of the American public to Marcy's circular was instantaneous and highly favorable. He had not miscalculated "what is suited to the general sentiments of our fellow citizens at home." Letters and messages expressing a high degree of favor began pouring into the Department of State from all quarters and areas.³⁸ Newspaper and editorial comments generally reflected this favorable attitude. Even the New York Herald, which was decidedly anti-Marcy, remarked that "all the country from Cape Cod to California, will cry amen."³⁹

The importance of national public opinion notwithstanding, the most significant response to Marcy's circular was to come from American diplomats themselves and, in turn, from the nations in which they served.

Taking into account the relatively high degree of importance attached to the formalities of diplomatic etiquette and protocol throughout nineteenth century Europe, it is somewhat surprising to discover that in many cases the response to Marcy's circular was either distinctly favorable or at least genuinely sympathetic. John M. Daniel, American minister at Turin, reported that in light of the costume circular he informed the Piedmontese minister of foreign affairs that he, along with other American ministers, would "hereafter appear at court in the respectable attire of American citizens than in uniforms which have no significance in our social system." The minister of foreign affairs, in turn, "expressed his acquiescence in the good sense and propriety of the instructions referred to, and stated it to be his belief that there would be no difficulty on that score at court."⁴⁰ Much the same response came from J. J. Seibels, the American minister to Belgium. Seibels added, "it is much to be regretted that a morbid sensibility to the ridiculous customs and formalities of the courts of Europe has heretofore induced the diplomatic and other agents of the United States residing here to depart so far from the customs, habits, and tastes of their own country."⁴¹

In Switzerland, where diplomatic costumes and uniforms had always been more or less frowned upon, Theodore S. Fay reported that "I could not refrain from making a favorable comparison between the simple manner of my reception by the chief magistrate of the only republic in Europe meriting the name, and the pomp and circumstance still surrounding the chief personages of monarchies."⁴² In France, Henry S. Sanford, the American chargé d'affaires, resolved to adopt much the same attitude. Deeming it his "duty to appear in citizen's dress," Sanford advised Drouyn de L'Huys, the French minister of foreign affairs, that he would henceforth dress in a manner befitting his status as an American. Sanford explained that his decision to comply with Marcy's directive was not intended as a personal affront to either the emperor or to the French nation and that he hoped that his actions would not be interpreted as implying such. The French minister ("with great cordiality") assured Sanford that his decision to appear at court in plain dress would in no way endanger the relations between the United States and France. He maintained, according to Sanford's subsequent report to the Department of State, that "acting in this matter in conformity to the wishes, instructions, and usages of the government, could not be any subject of complaint; and that he would be most happy to see me in this garb if I desired it. He added, moreover, that he would make the subject understood at court."⁴³

Despite the attitude of the French foreign ministry and despite the fact that Sanford later reported that the emperor "received me with marked attention,"⁴⁴ the American chargé's course of action was criticized by the French public.⁴⁵ In fact, Parisians soon sarcastically dubbed him "Black Crow" owing to his appearance in plain black dress.⁴⁶ Accordingly, when John Y. Mason, who had been appointed American minister plenipotentiary to France, arrived in Paris, he was hesitant to adopt Sanford's manner of court dress. Mason subsequently decided to exercise the option included in Marcy's circular and proceeded to appear at the French court in a full dress diplomatic uniform. He later explained to the Secretary of State that his original predilections "were decidedly in favor of the simplest dress of the American citizen." He reported that he discussed the matter with Drouyn de L'Huys, who informed him that Napoleon III would receive him in whatever dress he saw fit to wear. L'Huys added, however, that "as the instructions of my government had withdrawn all order prescribing costume, and left it to my own discretion, it would have been agreeable to the emperor . . . on the occasion of my establishing official relations with his government, to have conformed, in some degree, to the usage of ministers of my rank at his court." On this account, therefore, Mason decided to "modify" his dress in order not to "offend the sensibilities of

those it was my duty to conciliate."⁴⁷ His decision to conform to the French usage, however, not only irritated Secretary Marcy⁴⁸ but also provoked Sanford into resigning his position.⁴⁹

Mason was not the only American diplomat abroad who found himself obliged to exercise the option provided in the costume circular. From Berlin, minister P. D. Vroom wrote that "his majesty would not consider an appearance before him without costume respectful,"⁵⁰ while August Belmont, the American minister to the Netherlands, found that although he might appear at court in the dress of an American citizen, "evidently my wearing uniform would have been better liked."⁵¹ In Stockholm, the American minister, F. Schroeder, was informed by the Swedish king that "in the society of my family, and on occasions of court, no one can be received but in court dress, in conformity with established custom." Schroeder, of course, was infuriated. He wrote to Marcy that "my appearance at court in plain clothes would have been likely to be regarded by the Swedish government in the light of a spirit of republican propagandism." The American minister was convinced that "no society in Europe is more jealous in its maintenance of aristocratic symbols; and the king himself, although on many subjects a man of unusually large and liberal intellect, is a rigid conservative in all the antique ceremonies and exactions of his court."⁵²

The most interesting and controversial series of events

relating to the costume circular of 1853 occurred in Great Britain. The American minister at the Court of St. James, James Buchanan, had already established himself as an ardent advocate of republican simplicity in regard to the diplomatic costume question. Nevertheless, he received Marcy's directive with some misgivings, anticipating that his conformity to it might lessen his diplomatic effectiveness. On the other hand, Buchanan realized that his course of action at the most important court in Europe might set a precedent or serve as a model for other American diplomats to follow.⁵³ In this regard, and in keeping with his belief that American ministers should "wear something more in character with our democratic institutions than a coat covered with embroidery and gold lace," Buchanan decided to follow Marcy's instructions as closely as he possibly could.⁵⁴

In a "pretty animated conversation" with Sir Edward Cust, the British master of ceremonies,⁵⁵ Buchanan was told that although Queen Victoria "would not object to receive me at Court in any dress I chose to put on," an appearance in "the simple dress of an American citizen" would nevertheless be disagreeable to Her Majesty. Moreover, Cust informed Buchanan, if Marcy's circular was adhered to, the American minister could hardly "expect to be invited to Court Balls or Court dinners where all appeared in costume." Buchanan reported that he then "became somewhat indignant" and

informed Cust that "whilst I entertained the highest respect for Her Majesty & desired to treat her with the deference which was eminently her due, . . . it would not make the slightest difference to me, individually, whether I ever appeared at Court."⁵⁶

Writing to Marcy on October 28, 1853, Buchanan explained that he probably would "be placed, socially, in Coventry, on this question of dress; because it is certain, that should Her Majesty not invite the American Minister to her Balls & dinners, he will not be invited to the Balls & dinners of her courtiers." Although he himself did not seem to mind this possibility, Buchanan did express concern over what effect his social isolation might have upon the success of his mission. He concluded by maintaining that "should it prove to be impossible for me to conform to the suggestions of the Circular . . . then I shall certainly & cheerfully be guided by its earnest recommendations & adopt the nearest approach to it compatible with the due performance of my public duties."⁵⁷

Upon further consideration, however, Buchanan decided "neither to wear gold lace or embroidery at court" under any circumstances. Writing Marcy on February 7, Buchanan stated that "I did not deem it becoming in me, as the representative of a republic, to imitate a court-costume which may be altogether proper in the representatives of royalty." Accordingly, when he received

the usual invitation to the opening of Parliament with the statement that none might appear in the House of Lords unless in court costume, the matter was brought to a head. Rather than submit to a usage which personally offended him, Buchanan decided not to attend the ceremony.⁵⁸ His decision was roundly condemned by an irate British press, which referred to his action as a display of "Republican ill manners" and "American Puppyism."⁵⁹

Shortly after this incident, however, Buchanan was able to report to the Department of State that "the question of court costume has been finally settled to my entire satisfaction." At the suggestion of a "high official character," he began appearing at court in his plain American dress complemented by a "very plain black-handled and black-hilted sword." The sword, Buchanan had been told, was considered as being the "mark of a gentleman" and as a "token of respect to her majesty." Inasmuch as the addition of a sword could hardly detract from his plain black suit, Buchanan decided that this was the proper course to follow.⁶⁰ His decision, moreover, was acknowledged favorably by the queen. Upon being presented to Victoria on February 22, Buchanan reported that "an arch but benevolent smile lit up her countenance -- as much as to say, you are the first man who ever appeared before me at court in such a dress."⁶¹ In a

subsequent letter to Marcy on February 24, he maintained that "I have never felt prouder, as a citizen of my country, than when I stood amidst the brilliant circle of foreign ministers and other court dignitaries, 'in the simple dress of an American citizen'." ⁶²

In retrospect, it can be seen that Secretary of State Marcy's diplomatic costume circular enjoyed but limited success. In the immediate years after its issuance, there continued to be a great deal of variation in the manner in which American diplomats attired themselves in foreign courts. But Marcy's circular did have the effect of opening the door for future action. This, in turn, came in 1867 when Congress laid down a rule which prohibited American diplomatic representatives from wearing costumes of any kind. ⁶³ In addition to being a distinct victory for advocates of republican simplicity, this ruling, in a sense, was a posthumous victory for William Marcy and for all those before him who believed, with the New York Evening Post, that the American diplomat "should be an American; he should look like an American, talk like an American, and be an American example." ⁶⁴

¹Cited in Russel Blaine Nye, The Cultural Life of the New Nation, 1776-1830 (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), 41.

²George Washington to Bushrod Washington, January 15, 1783, in Washington, Writings, XXVI, 40.

³Bayard, Papers, 472-73.

⁴Gouverneur Morris, The Diary and Letters of Gouverneur Morris, 2 vols., ed. Anne Cary Morris (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1888), I, 531.

⁵JQA Memoirs, IV, 492.

⁶Edward Everett to Mr. Brooks, December 17, 1841, cited in Paul Revere Frothingham, Edward Everett, Orator and Statesman (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1925), 191-92.

⁷Cited in Ibid., 221.

⁸Edward Everett to Robert C. Winthrop, November 18, 1843, cited in Ibid., 221-22.

⁹Ibid., 221.

¹⁰Foster, Practice of Diplomacy, 138.

¹¹"Benjamin Franklin to Mrs. Thompson, February 8, 1888, in Benjamin Franklin, The Works of Benjamin Franklin, 12 vols., ed. John Bigelow (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1904), VII, 185.

¹²Madame du Deffand to Horace Walpole, March 22, 1778, cited in Willson, Ambassadors to France, 8.

¹³John W. Foster, A Century of American Diplomacy, Being a Brief Review of the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1776-1876 (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1900), 50.

¹⁴Cited in Foster, Practice of Diplomacy, 139.

¹⁵Cited in Ibid., 140.

¹⁶Ibid., 139-40; see also, Willson, Ambassadors to France, 9.

¹⁷John Adams to John Jay, May 13, 1785, Adams, Works, VIII, 250-51.

¹⁸Thomas Jefferson, "Circular to American Consuls," August 26, 1790, in Jefferson, Papers, XVII, 423-24.

¹⁹John Quincy Adams to John Adams, April 15, 1798, in JQA Writings, II, 278.

²⁰James Monroe to James A. Bayard, April 23, 1813, in Bayard, Papers, 217.

²¹Memorandum enclosed with James A. Bayard to James Monroe, April 29, 1813, in Ibid., 217.

²²Bemis, John Quincy Adams and the Foundations of American Foreign Policy, 186.

²³Bayard, Papers, 454-55.

²⁴Bemis, John Quincy Adams and the Foundations of American Foreign Policy, 186.

²⁵"Memorandum of the dress of an American minister, as fixed by the mission to Ghent," in Senate Executive Document 31, 36 Cong. 1 Sess., IX (1859-60), 3.

²⁶Forestier's portrait is reproduced in Jennings B. Sanders, A College History of the United States, 2 vols. (Evanston: Row, Peterson, 1962), I, 213.

²⁷"Memorandum," in SED 31, 3.

²⁸Register of Debates, 20 Cong. 1 Sess., IV (part I, 1827-28), 1375-76.

²⁹Andrew Jackson to Martin Van Buren, May 18, 1829, in Jackson, Correspondence, IV, 34.

³⁰"Extract from the personal instructions to the diplomatic agents of the United States, adopted at the commencement of the administration of President Jackson," in SED 31, 4.

³¹William C. Rives to Martin Van Buren, July 16, 1829, in Van Buren MSS., series 2, reel 8.

³²Martin Van Buren to William C. Rives, July 28, 1829, in William C. Rives Papers, Library of Congress, box 45.

³³Lewis Cass to James Buchanan, April 2, 1860, in SED 31, 1-2.

³⁴Roy Franklin Nichols, Franklin Pierce, Young Hickory of the Granite Hills (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1958), 269.

³⁵"Extract from circular, dated Department of State, June 1, 1853," in SED 31, 4-5; italics mine.

³⁶Ivor D. Spencer, The Victor and the Spoils: A Life of William L. Marcy (Providence: Brown University Press, 1959), 235.

³⁷William L. Marcy to P. M. Wetmore, June 10, 1841, cited in Ibid., 233.

³⁸Ibid., 235.

³⁹New York Herald, June 15, 1853, cited in Ibid., 235.

⁴⁰John M. Daniel to William L. Marcy, October 10, 1853, in SED 31, 7.

⁴¹J. J. Seibels to William L. Marcy, September 30, 1853, in Ibid., 7.

⁴²Theodore S. Fay to William L. Marcy, June 30, 1853, in Ibid., 5.

⁴³Henry S. Sanford to William L. Marcy, August 18, 1853, in Ibid., 5-6.

⁴⁴Henry S. Sanford to William L. Marcy, January 22, 1854, in Ibid., 12.

⁴⁵Spencer, Victor and the Spoils, 236.

⁴⁶Ibid., 237.

⁴⁷ John Y. Mason to William L. Marcy, January 28, 1854, in SED 31, 13-16.

⁴⁸ See, for example, William L. Marcy to Henry S. Sanford, February 18, 1854, in Ibid., 19. This letter is also in Van Buren MSS., series 2, reel 33.

⁴⁹ Henry S. Sanford to William L. Marcy, January 22, 1854, in Ibid., 11-13.

⁵⁰ P. D. Vroom to William L. Marcy, October 31, 1853, in Ibid., 8.

⁵¹ August Belmont to William L. Marcy, November 8, 1853, in Ibid., 8-9.

⁵² F. Schroeder to William L. Marcy, November 24, 1853, in Ibid., 9-10.

⁵³ James Buchanan to William L. Marcy, October 28, 1853, in NA. MSS., Despatches, Great Britain, LXV, reel 61.

⁵⁴ James Buchanan to William L. Marcy, February 7, 1854, in SED 31, 17.

⁵⁵ James Buchanan to Harriet Lane, undated (probably November 1, 1853), in James Buchanan, The Works of James Buchanan, 12 vols., ed. John Bassett Moore (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1908-11), IX, 87.

⁵⁶ James Buchanan to William L. Marcy, October 28, 1853, in NA. MSS., Despatches, Great Britain, LXV, reel 61.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ James Buchanan to William L. Marcy, February 7, 1854, in SED 31, 16-18.

⁵⁹ Cited in Philip Shriver Klein, President James Buchanan, A Biography (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1962), 228.

⁶⁰ James Buchanan to William L. Marcy, February 24, 1854, in SED 31, 19-20.

⁶¹ Cited in Klein, Buchanan, 229.

⁶² James Buchanan to William L. Marcy, February 24, 1854, in SED 31, 19.

⁶³ Foster, Practice of Diplomacy, 136.

⁶⁴ New York Evening Post, June 15, 1853.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE RESPONSE TO NATIONALISM

During the second administration of James Madison, Secretary of State James Monroe drafted a set of rules regulating the relations between the American government and foreign ministers. Among other things, these rather rigid rules provided that American cabinet secretaries and their wives were to take precedence over members of the diplomatic corps and their wives at official governmental functions.

The reasons which prompted the Madison administration to inject this rigidity into American diplomatic etiquette and protocol must remain a matter of speculation, as neither the President nor the Secretary of State saw fit to record their motivations at the time. It seems reasonable to believe, however, that the drafting of the new diplomatic rules was related to the development of American nationalism during the War of 1812. This nationalism was soon to be greatly heightened by the Battle of New Orleans and the Treaty of Ghent.¹ Albert Gallatin, one of the American commissioners who signed the Treaty of Ghent, wrote in 1816 that "the War has renewed and reinstated the national feelings which the Revolution had given and which were daily lessened. The people have now more general objects of attachment with which their pride and political

opinions are connected. They are more American; they feel and act more like a nation; and I hope that the permanency of the Union is thereby better secured."² The new diplomatic rules were one facet of this developing pattern of American nationalism. When Monroe explained that the new protocol was formulated in part "to secure to the Ministers of the U.S. the respect which is due to their publick Characters abroad," he was not merely uttering platitudes but rather expressing an intense nationalistic aspiration.

The injection of nationalism into American diplomatic etiquette and protocol during this period is further illustrated by the uncompromising position the United States adopted in regard to treaty-etiquette in general and the so-called alternat in particular. Prior to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, European treaty-etiquette dictated that the most powerful or the most venerable nation contracting a bilateral agreement should take precedence over the other contracting party.³ This meant that the name of the nation so favored would appear first in the preamble and first in the text of every copy of the executed treaty. With the development of power relationships between the major European nations during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, however, this system was replaced by the practice of the alternat. The alternat (rotation) gave each contracting party

the right to be first-named in its copy of the treaty or agreement. This procedure was subsequently recognized and formalized by the Congress of Vienna in 1814.⁴

During the early years of its existence, the United States was viewed by most of the European powers as an upstart republic, not entitled to the precedence generally reserved for monarchies. Accordingly, in nearly every treaty and international agreement signed by the United States prior to 1815 the alternat was not observed.⁵ In the definitive Treaty of Paris (1783), which ended the American war for independence, for example, the British plenipotentiary, David Hartley, was accorded the privilege of signing his name first on both copies of the treaty, while the American commissioners, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and John Jay, followed in strict alphabetical order. Moreover, the British government and the English king were given precedence throughout the texts of both copies. Hartley, the British commissioner, had been given strict orders from the Foreign Office to exclude the principle of the alternat from the treaty. On August 21, 1783, Charles James Fox, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, wrote to Hartley informing him of this matter. "When a treaty is signed between two Crowned Heads in order to prevent disputes about precedence," Fox explained, "the name of the one stands first in one instrument and that of the other in the other, but when the treaty is

between a crowned Head and a Republic, the name of the Monarch is mentioned first in each instrument."⁶ On September 1, two days before the official signing, Hartley informed Fox that "the treaties are drawn out for signature as you have expressed it viz: giving precedence to the Crowned Head. The American Ministers never had a thought of disputing the priority or equality of rank & therefore I have had no occasion to mention the subject."⁷

During the negotiations at Ghent to conclude the War of 1812 matters of etiquette were early in sharp dispute. Upon the arrival of the British ministers on August 6, 1814, the American plenipotentiaries -- John Quincy Adams, James A. Bayard, Henry Clay, Jonathan Russell, and Albert Gallatin -- were approached by the British delegation's secretary, who informed them that the British commissioners -- Lord Gambier, Henry Goulburn, and Dr. William Adams -- were anxious to begin negotiations and proposed, on that account, to meet with their American counterparts at the Hotel du Lion d'Or, where the three Englishmen had taken lodgings.⁸ This arrangement was totally unacceptable to the Americans. Adams labeled the invitation "an offensive pretension to superiority."⁹ Clay, who had earlier maintained that "I am not going during this negotiation to give consequence to any affair of mere etiquette,"¹⁰ echoed Adams' sentiments on this point. "It appeared to us," Clay wrote, "that according to established

usage, we were entitled to the first visit; and that there was, both in the place fixed on and in the precision of the time designated, the evidence of an assumption of superiority on their part, which we could not admit."¹¹ Accordingly, the Americans sent their secretary to the British commissioners, informing them that "we should be happy to meet and confer with the Commissioners, and exchange full powers with them, at any time which they would indicate, and at any place other than their own lodgings."¹² The British agreed to this proposal and neutral meeting grounds were subsequently arranged.

During the course of the actual negotiations, other problems concerning etiquette and protocol cropped up to confuse the real issues at stake. The British temporized in delivering their preliminary draft of the proposed treaty to the Americans, feeling that there was a distinct advantage in receiving the first draft of the other contracting party before submitting their own. This attitude infuriated John Quincy Adams, who scoffed at "plenipotentiaries who are obliged to send to the Privy Council for objections of etiquette and question who shall give or receive the first draft."¹³ The Americans then proposed to exchange the first drafts simultaneously, thereby avoiding any possible breach of etiquette. The British remained adamant, however. Finally, the frustrated Americans decided to yield to this British pretension.

"It was too plain that their advantage and their etiquette were nothing but devices for wasting time," Adams wrote, "and so we sent them a complete project drawn up in form, with nothing but blanks of time and place to fill to make it a treaty." In a letter to his wife, Adams declared that "the pretended etiquette is an absurdity. The negotiation was proposed by the British government. It was the business of the British government to present first, in form as well as in substance, the terms upon which they were willing to conclude the peace."¹⁴

While the British and American plenipotentiaries divided at times over matters involving diplomatic etiquette and protocol, within the American delegation itself such matters occasionally threatened to jeopardize the solidarity of the group. One such occasion arose when Adams, Bayard, and Gallatin were made honorary members of Ghent's Society of Fine Arts and Letters, and Russell and Clay of the Society of Agriculture and Botany. According to Adams, the two societies had drawn lots to determine which of the commissioners would be named to the respective groups. As the Society of Fine Arts and Letters was the more prestigious of the two organizations, Clay and Russell apparently felt slighted. In fact, Adams later wrote, Russell "appeared to think his dignity most offended. He said that if the people of Ghent meant to show us civility they should treat us equally; that he assumed for his

part no superiority, and would not admit of any." Bayard endeavored to reassure Russell that no offence had been intended and that he, along with Adams and Gallatin, disclaimed "any assumption of superiority," maintaining that "any such pretension would be ridiculous." Finally, his fellow commissioners persuaded Russell to accept the situation with equanimity, which, after a brief period of sulking, he apparently did.¹⁵

At the close of the Ghent mission, a dispute developed between Adams and Clay as to who should be entrusted with the papers and notes of the official proceedings of the commission. Adams, as the first-named member of the group, maintained that usage and protocol dictated that he should retain possession of the official papers until instructed otherwise by the Department of State. Clay, however, "said he did not pay any regard to the precedent . . . and knew nothing about the usage." For his own personal reference and for preservation as historical archives, Clay was determined to take the papers back to the United States immediately. Adams resisted. This, in turn, merely increased Clay's determination. Both he and Russell suggested that the commission vote as to the proper procedure to follow, but Adams refused to entertain such a motion. "I said I should not put it to a vote, not considering it as a point to be decided by a vote." Adams considered the whole controversy "a piece of chicanery

upon a trifle," interpreting Clay's accusation that he was "arrogating prerogative and superiority" as nothing more than "cavilling upon a bagatelle merely because it would be convenient to himself to have the papers." After further debate, Clay finally gave in and Adams retained possession of the papers.¹⁶

Considering the amount of time devoted to debating such questions, it is perhaps strange that nothing was said or done by the Americans about the alternat. In the final version of the treaty, which was completed in triplicate and signed on December 24, 1814, His Britannic Majesty took precedence over the United States throughout every copy, while the British commissioners (Gambier, Goulburn, and Adams, in that order) signed the document above the signatures of the American commissioners (Adams, Bayard, Clay, Russell, and Gallatin, respectively).¹⁷

For failing to raise this issue, John Quincy Adams later wrote that he "had received a rap on the knuckles from home."¹⁸ He was obviously referring to the directive addressed to him by Secretary of State Monroe on March 13, 1815. Monroe expressed his displeasure at the fact that the American ministers had not insisted upon the alternat at Ghent. "It is understood," he said, "that in treaties between all powers, this principle of equality is generally, if not invariably recognized and observed." Although he confessed that the oversight was probably due to a preoccupation with the more important terms of peace, Monroe hastened to

add that in the future the principle of the alternat should be incorporated into all American treaties and international agreements. The United States was a sovereign nation and should not, on that account, yield precedence to any country. "It is a mortifying truth that concessions, however generous the motive, seldom produce the desired effect. They more frequently inspire improper pretensions in the opposite party."¹⁹

This "rap on the knuckles" was sufficient to arouse the nationalistic Adams, who became determined from that point on permanently to secure the alternat for the United States. His first opportunity to establish a precedent along these lines was shortly forthcoming. Adams, Clay, and Gallatin had travelled to London shortly after the signing of the Treaty of Ghent. The Americans had been commissioned to negotiate a general treaty of commerce with the British. During the course of the relatively brief negotiations which resulted in the Commercial Convention of 1815, Adams made it a special point to inform the British commissioners, William Adams, Henry Goulburn, and Frederick John Robinson, that there had been an error, "both in the preamble and in the order of signatures at Ghent, which it would be necessary to avoid repeating at present."²⁰ The error, of course, had been the omission of the alternat. Adams took special care, therefore, to inform the

British that he for one would refuse to sign any agreement unless the alternat was observed in all respects.

Two of the British commissioners, Goulburn and Dr. Adams, maintained that they were unaware that such a usage even existed. "I told Goulburn," Adams later wrote, "that if he would take the trouble of enquiring at the Foreign Office he would find it a universal usage."²¹ The British ministers then objected to Adams' demand because, they insisted, the alternat would require that the wording of the two treaty copies would necessarily have to be different, thereby adding an element of confusion and possible error to the definitive agreement. Adams replied that "the mere variation of order, in naming the parties, made no change either in the substance or in the words of the treaty; it did not in any manner affect the essential accuracy of the copies."²²

The two delegations then separated, each to prepare a draft to be submitted to the other party on the following Monday. Upon receipt of the British draft, Adams discovered that although they had made provision for signing the treaty in parallel lines, the British had ignored the principle of the alternat by appending the statement "done in duplicate" to their draft. Infuriated, Adams set about at once to rewrite the draft using the alternat throughout.²³ His determination to secure the alternat for the United States, however, was not shared by Gallatin or Clay, who

both felt that it was somewhat silly to argue over trifles.

Gallatin suggested that the American commission accept the British draft without the alternat. He felt that Adams's revision was "entirely wrong; it will throw the whole business into confusion." Adams "preemptorily refused," and added, in a heated and angry manner: "Mr. Gallatin, you and Mr. Clay may do as you please, but I will not sign the treaty without the alternative observed throughout."

"Now, don't fly off in this manner," Gallatin responded. "Indeed, sir," Adams countered, "I will not sign the treaty in any other form. I am so far from thinking with Mr. Clay that it is of no importance, that I think it by much the most important thing that we shall obtain by this treaty. The treaty itself I very much dislike, and it is only out of deference to you and Mr. Clay that I consent to sign it at all."²⁴ Adams had his way. Clay and Gallatin finally agreed to the alternat throughout the revised draft. In reality, they had no choice other than to concede this point to Adams in light of the Secretary of State's directive.

Moreover, the British commissioners became convinced that the American government was deadly serious in its demand for diplomatic equality, and the formal copies of the Commercial Convention which were signed on July 3, 1815, observed the

principle of the alternat throughout. The American and British plenipotentiaries signed their names in parallel columns, the American column on the left hand side of the American copy, and the British column on the left hand side of the British copy. In addition, this same principle of rotation was observed in the respective preambles and bodies of the convention.²⁵

The United States was determined to maintain this precedent during the administrations of James Monroe (1817-25). Monroe's Secretary of State, John Quincy Adams, made a special point to safeguard the diplomatic victory he had so painstakingly fought for at London in 1815. In his "Form of Personal Instructions" to American diplomats abroad (1817), Adams gave top priority to the principle of the alternat. "This practice," Adams began, "having been accidentally omitted on one or two occasions, to be observed on by the United States, the omission was followed by indications of a disposition in certain European Governments, to question its application to them. It became therefore proper to insist upon it, as was accordingly done with effect." Having explained these circumstances, Adams proceeded to instruct American diplomats to "consider it as a standing Instruction to adhere to this alternative in the conclusion of any Treaty, Convention or other document, to be jointly signed by you and the Plenipotentiary of any other Power."²⁶

Adams was himself the first American statesman to negotiate a major international treaty under the new dispensation. Beginning in December 1817, Adams and Luis de Onís, the Spanish minister in Washington, undertook negotiations which resulted in the Transcontinental Treaty in 1819. By this treaty, the United States acquired east and west Florida. The agreement also defined the boundary line between the United States and Spanish-American possessions west of the Mississippi River.

The Transcontinental Treaty was a notable diplomatic achievement for the United States, and Adams improved the occasion by strongly and successfully reaffirming the American determination to resist European pretensions in respect to precedence in diplomatic agreements. Onís had expressed some objection to the use of the alternat and, although he had acquiesced upon the principle for inclusion into the treaty then under discussion, he suggested that perhaps he should draft a "protest" to insure that the same procedure would never be followed again in treaties between the United States and Spain. Adams would not hear of this. "I told him," the Secretary of State later wrote, "I certainly could not receive any such protest, for that, so far from its not being drawn into a precedent, it was our express intention that it should be a permanent

precedent, and I could assure him we should never hereafter conclude a treaty with Spain without insisting upon the same mode of signature and the same alternative first naming of the parties."²⁷

It was largely owing to the persistence of John Quincy Adams and, to a lesser extent, James Madison and James Monroe, that American diplomatic etiquette and protocol was liberally infused with a sense of nationalism during the early national period. The United States had scored a major diplomatic victory, one which would serve as a precedent for the future and one which would be observed and maintained, with but a few inadvertent lapses, thereafter.

President Andrew Jackson and his successors during the remainder of the nineteenth century continued to maintain with occasional augmentations the diplomatic etiquette and protocol which had been fashioned during the early national period.²⁸ The exact nature of American diplomatic etiquette and protocol had varied considerably throughout the early national period. Individual idiosyncrasies and the personal preferences and tastes of presidents, secretaries of state, and diplomats themselves had often tended to obscure the essential issues at stake. Nevertheless, a rather clear line of development in the evolution of American diplomatic etiquette and protocol can easily be discerned during the first four decades of the nation's existence.

The initial framework, of course, had been created by presidents Washington and Adams. Borrowing liberally from European diplomatic manners, Washington and Adams had nonetheless succeeded in giving American diplomatic etiquette and protocol a certain distinctiveness all of its own -- a distinctiveness which, for lack of a better term, can be called republican simplicity. This synthesis of European formality and republican simplicity was reduced to an absurdity under President Jefferson, whose insistence upon pure democratic manners created a great deal of friction among the diplomatic corps and precipitated a full-scale social embroglio. To have continued Jeffersonian diplomatic etiquette and protocol would have been both naive and impractical. On this account, therefore, Jefferson's successors -- James Madison, James Monroe, and John Quincy Adams -- successfully returned to the more balanced policy which had existed under Washington and the elder Adams.

In addition, the post-Jeffersonian era also witnessed the infusion of a sense of nationalism into American diplomatic etiquette and protocol. This was especially true following the War of 1812. America's rise in consequence among the nations of the world was attended by an increased sense of patriotism -- a patriotism which demanded that the United States be accorded recognition beyond that which was normally reserved for second-class powers.

The essence of American diplomatic etiquette and protocol during the early national period was perhaps best expressed in John Quincy Adams's "Form of Personal Instructions" to American ministers abroad in 1817. These instructions represented the synthesis which had been arrived at between formality and republican simplicity, and they were also indicative of the heightened sense of nationalism in American diplomatic manners after 1814. Although directed to American diplomatic representatives overseas, Adams's instructions nonetheless cast a true reflection upon the domestic front and the mentality which produced them. On the one hand, Adams directed American diplomats to show due respect to European etiquette and protocol, while on the other he warned against the acceptance of the "bauble presents" usually presented to foreign ministers by European governments. Finally, the nationalistically inspired document directed American ministers never to enter into any official treaty or convention without the strict observance of the alternat throughout.²⁹

What is perhaps even more significant is that Adams's instructions clearly foreshadowed the Monroe Doctrine of 1823. In fact, the entire evolution of American diplomatic etiquette and protocol during the early national period in many ways paralleled the formulation and development of American foreign policy in

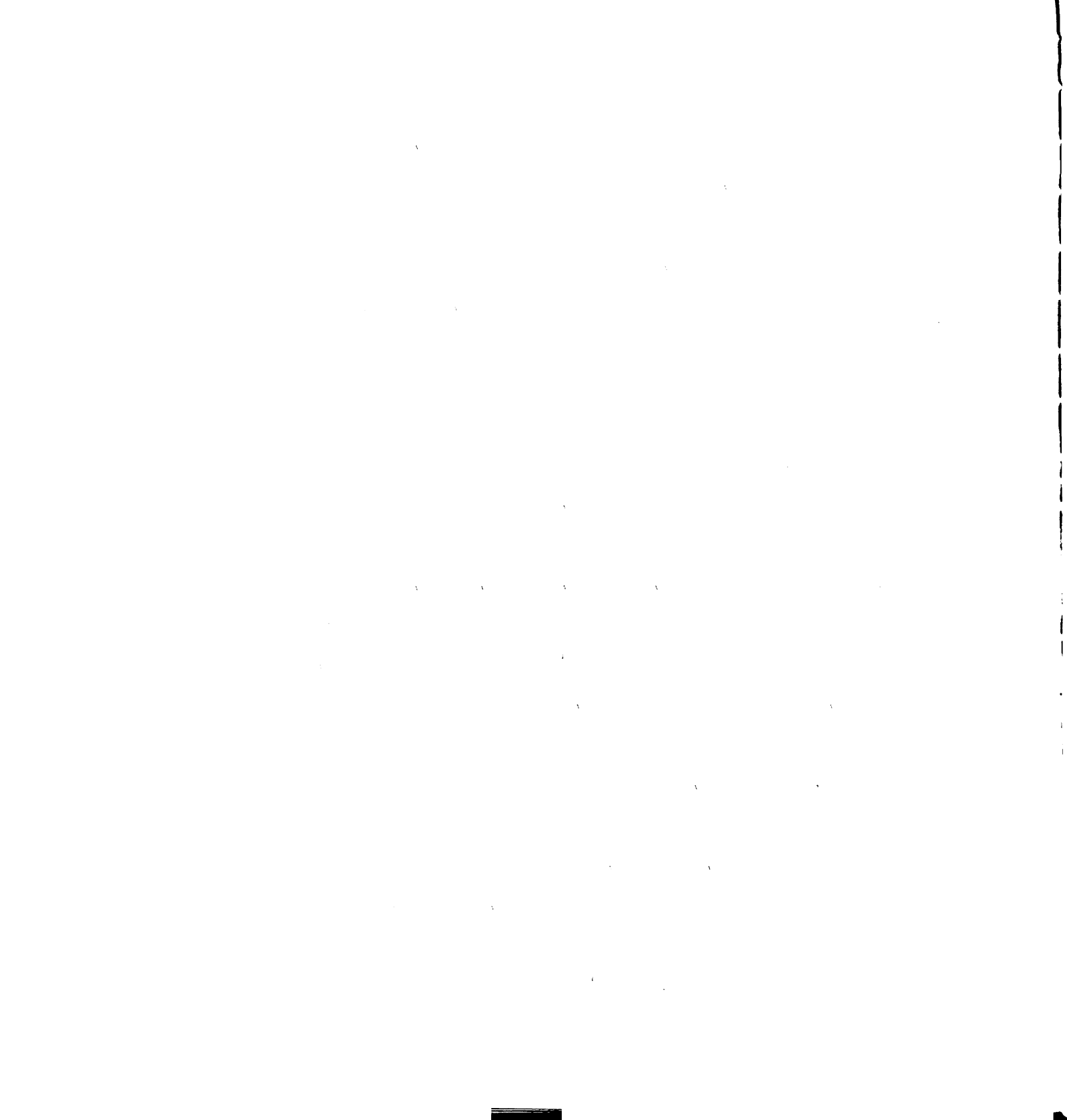
general. The architects of American foreign policy were imbued with the desire to create a distinctive approach to foreign affairs, one which would both incorporate and express the qualities of American republicanism and nationalism.

Central to the thinking of the founding fathers was the doctrine of the two spheres. They recognized that the American republican experiment was essentially different from the prevailing monarchical regimes of Europe. On this account, it was considered wise to fashion a foreign policy that would reflect the principle of the separation of the New World from the Old. As early as 1776, Thomas Paine had asserted in Common Sense that it was "the true interest of America to steer clear of European contentions."³⁰ Paine, of course, was only expressing the prevailing sentiments of most Americans after 1775. The image of two worlds soon became a dominant American idea, one which was expressed in the writings of most of the founding fathers. John Adams, for example, later wrote that "the principle of foreign affairs which I then advocated . . . was . . . that we should separate ourselves, as far as possible and as long as possible, from all European politics and wars."³¹

Echoing Paine's advice and Adams's sentiments, George Washington's Farewell Address of September 19, 1796, was the first official and perhaps the most eloquent expression of the

doctrine of the two spheres and the general principle of American separation from the affairs of the Old World. "Europe," according to Washington, "has a set of primary interests which to us have none or a very remote relation. Hence she must be engaged in frequent controversies, the causes of which are essentially foreign to our concerns." Owing to these factors, therefore, "it must be unwise in us to implicate ourselves by artificial ties in the ordinary vicissitudes of her politics or the ordinary combinations and collisions of her friendships and her enmities." Maintaining that "our detached and distant situation invites and enables us to pursue a different course," the first President advised his countrymen not to "entangle our peace and prosperity in the toils of European ambition, rivalry, interest, humor or caprice."³²

The consolidation of the two spheres theory into dogma can be dated from President Jefferson's ill-fated Embargo of 1807, which, according to Dexter Perkins, was "the ultimate of the isolationist conception."³³ The climax of this consolidation came in 1823. In that year, President James Monroe hurled his now famous message of defiance at the several courts of Europe. "The American continents," he wrote, "by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintain, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers." Moreover, Europe's political system was "essentially different" from the American republican experiment and the



two should not be mixed. The United States, Monroe continued, would consciously avoid involvement in strictly European affairs, but any attempt to extend European control to countries in the western hemisphere that had already won their independence would be considered as "the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States" and consequently a threat to the nation's "peace and safety."³⁴

The Monroe Doctrine was the final, classic enunciation of the two spheres theory during the early national period.³⁵ Its prime ingredients, of course, had been nationalism and American republican self-awareness. These ingredients, moreover, had given direction to and had formed an integral part of the American attempt to achieve cultural independence from Europe during this same period. The architects of American cultural independence, like the architects of American foreign policy, had early recognized that the United States was essentially different from Europe. Accordingly, American culture should reflect this difference. It was thought that the development of a national culture would in part justify America's independent station. The ability to develop a national art and literature, for example, would tend to validate the separation from the Old World and enhance American prestige as an independent nation abroad. During the early national period, therefore, many writers and artists in the United

States occupied themselves with creating a civilization worthy of the New World.³⁶

The forces that shaped both American foreign policy and American cultural nationalism could not help but affect the formulation of American diplomatic etiquette and protocol during the early national period. All three phenomena -- foreign policy, cultural nationalism, and diplomatic etiquette and protocol -- developed contemporaneously and simultaneously and all three, in essence, were expressions of American republicanism and nationalism.

Although retaining elements of traditional European diplomatic manners, American diplomatic etiquette and protocol by 1828 had achieved a certain distinctiveness which indeed set it apart from the court practices of the Old World. By the time Andrew Jackson was inaugurated in 1829, the essential ingredients of American diplomatic etiquette and protocol had been formulated. Jackson and his successors would follow this pattern fairly closely throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century, supplementing it (as in the case of Secretary of State Marcy's costume circular of 1853) but never departing from the essentials which had been formulated during the early national period.

¹George Dangerfield, The Awakening of American Nationalism (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 1-5.

²Cited in Ibid., 3-4.

³Foster, Practice of Diplomacy, 251. Multilateral treaties were usually signed in alphabetical order without regard to precedence.

⁴Stuart, American Diplomatic and Consular Practice, 127.

⁵One of the few exceptions to this was the treaty of 1803 (Louisiana Purchase) with France.

⁶Charles James Fox to David Hartley, August 21, 1783, cited in Hunter Miller, ed., Treaties and other International Acts of the United States of America (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1931), II, 157.

⁷David Hartley to Charles James Fox, September 1, 1783, cited in Ibid.

⁸JQA Memoirs, III, 3-4 and Henry Clay to James Monroe, August 18, 1814, in Henry Clay, The Papers of Henry Clay, 3 vols. to date, ed., James F. Hopkins (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1959-67), I, 963.

⁹JQA Memoirs, III, 3.

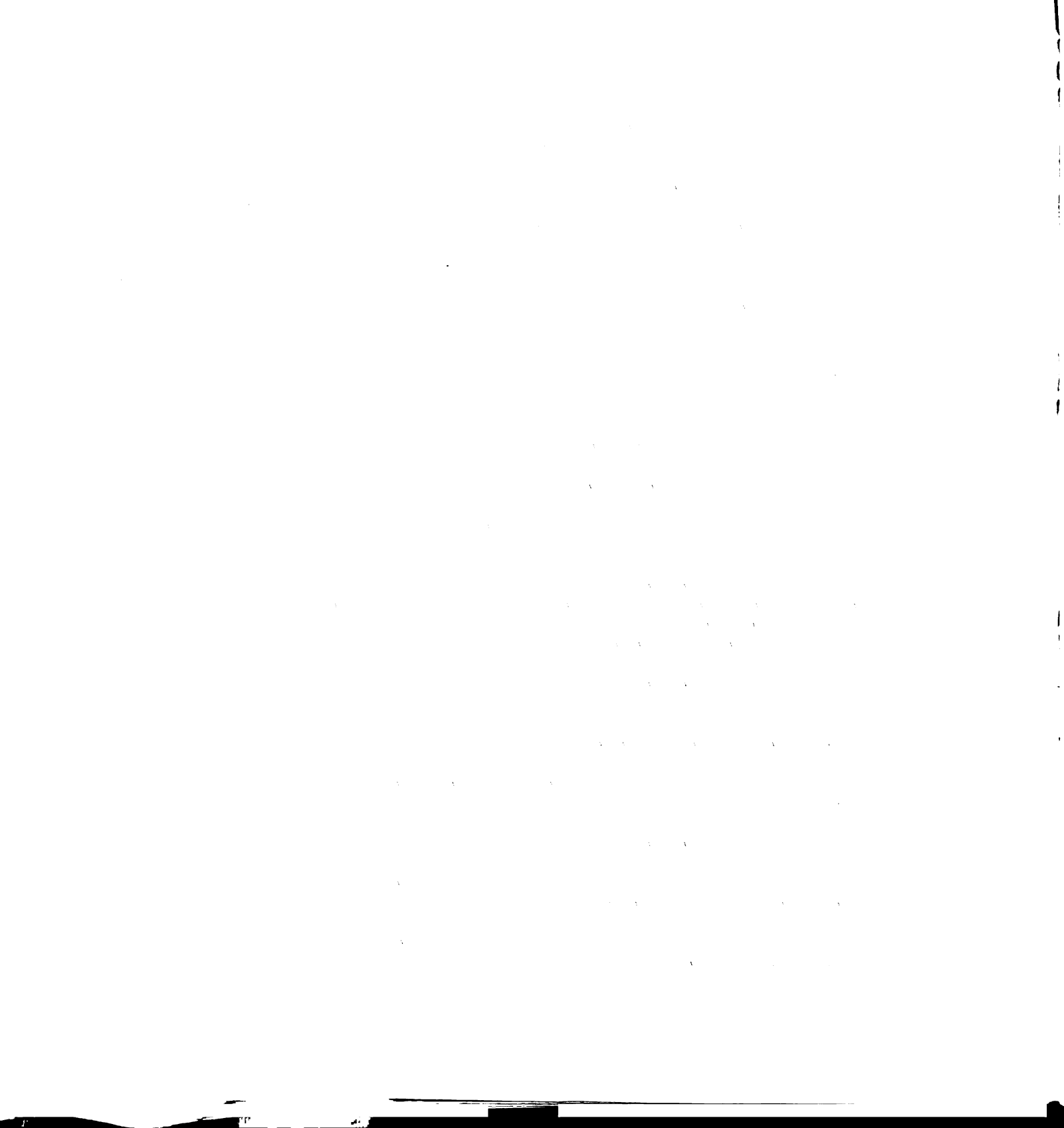
¹⁰Henry Clay to James A. Bayard and Albert Gallatin, May 2, 1814, in Clay, Papers, I, 891.

¹¹Henry Clay to James Monroe, August 18, 1814, in Ibid., 963.

¹²JQA Memoirs, III, 3-4.

¹³John Quincy Adams to William Harris Crawford, November 6, 1814, in JQA Writings, V, 180-81.

¹⁴John Quincy Adams to Louisa Catherine Adams, November 22, 1814, in Ibid., 203-204.



¹⁵JQA Memoirs, III, 58-59, and Bayard, Papers, 304n.

¹⁶JQA Memoirs, III, 128-44, and Bayard, Papers, 368-71.

¹⁷Miller, Treaties, II, 582.

¹⁸John Quincy Adams to Jonathan Russell, October 10, 1815, in JQA Writings, V, 415-16.

¹⁹James Monroe to John Adams, March 13, 1815, in Adams MSS., reel 422.

²⁰JQA Memoirs, III, 237. See also John Quincy Adams to James Monroe, July 14, 1815, in NA. MSS., Despatches, Great Britain, XIX, reel 15.

²¹JQA Memoirs, III, 237.

²²Ibid., 237-38.

²³Ibid., 241, and John Quincy Adams to James Monroe, July 14, 1815, in NA. MSS., Despatches, Great Britain, XIX, reel 15.

²⁴JQA Memoirs, III, 242-43.

²⁵Ibid., 246-47, and John Quincy Adams to James Monroe, July 14, 1815, in NA. MSS., Despatches, Great Britain, XIX, reel 15.

²⁶John Quincy Adams, "Form of Personal Instructions" in Adams MSS., reel 439. See also: John Quincy Adams to Richard Rush, November 6, 1817, in NA. MSS., Instructions: All Countries, VIII, reel 3, 152-64, and John Quincy Adams to Henry Middleton, June 7, 1820, in Ibid., reel 4, 15-16.

²⁷JQA Memoirs, IV, 271-72.

²⁸During the Jacksonian regime, for example, presidential levees were maintained, although Old Hickory himself felt that they were really inconsequential affairs, characterized by "hypocrisy and hollow heartedness." See Andrew Jackson to John Coffee, January 23, 1825, in Jackson, Correspondence, III, 274. Jackson also implemented the Monroe directive of 1814 explicitly -- all

cabinet members being accorded official precedence over foreign ministers. On this, see Smith, Washington Society, 376.

²⁹ John Quincy Adams, "Form of Personal Instructions," in Adams MSS., reel 439.

³⁰ Cited in Felix Gilbert, To the Farewell Address (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 43.

³¹ Adams, Works, I, 200-201.

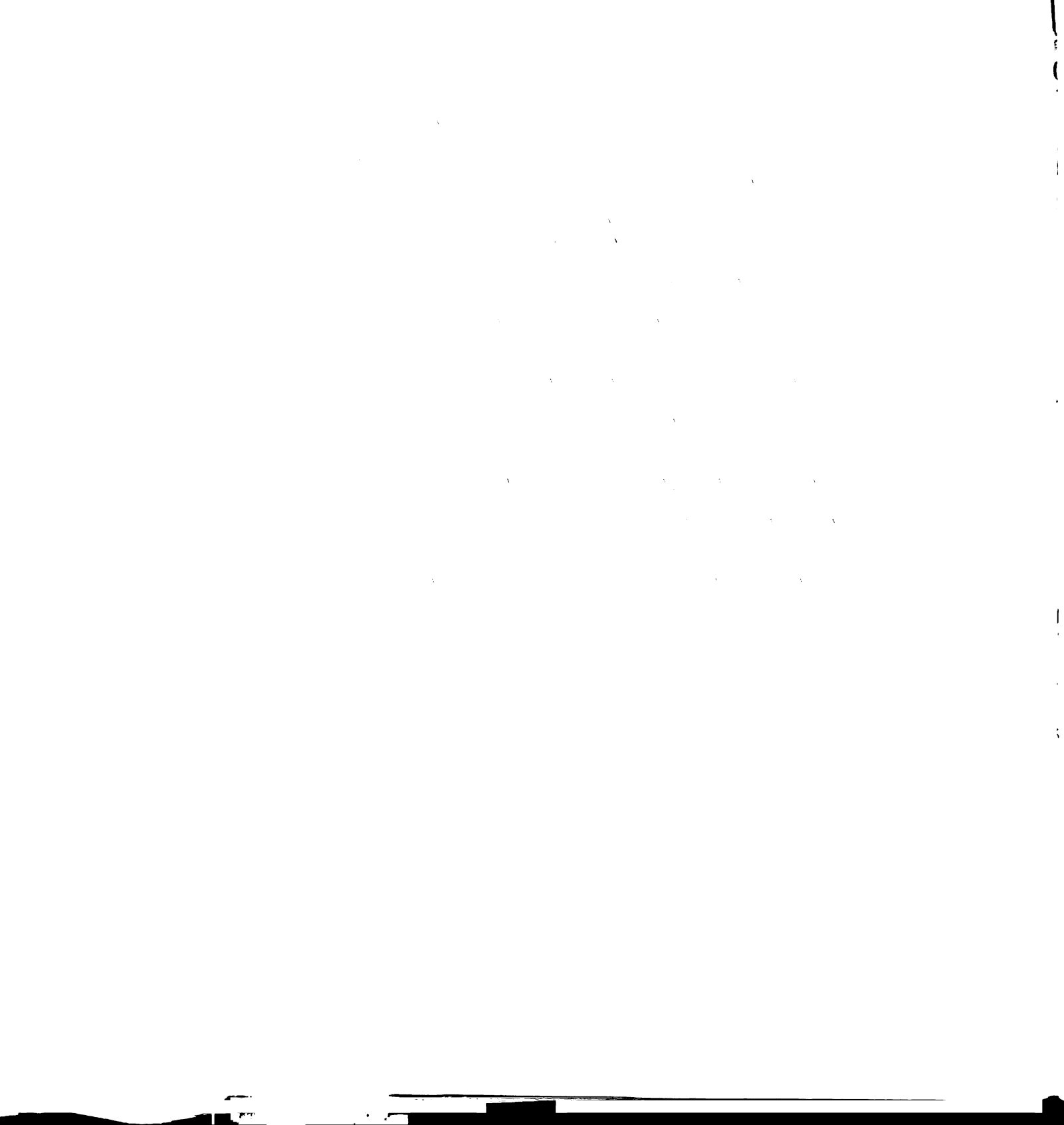
³² Cited in Gilbert, Farewell Address, 144 ff.

³³ Dexter Perkins, A History of the Monroe Doctrine (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1955), 21.

³⁴ Cited in Ibid., 391 ff.

³⁵ For further elaboration on the doctrine of the two spheres, see Ibid., 3-64, and Paul A. Varg, Foreign Policies of the Founding Fathers (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1963), 300-306.

³⁶ For an excellent discussion of American cultural nationalism, see Nye, Cultural Life of the New Nation, 235 ff.



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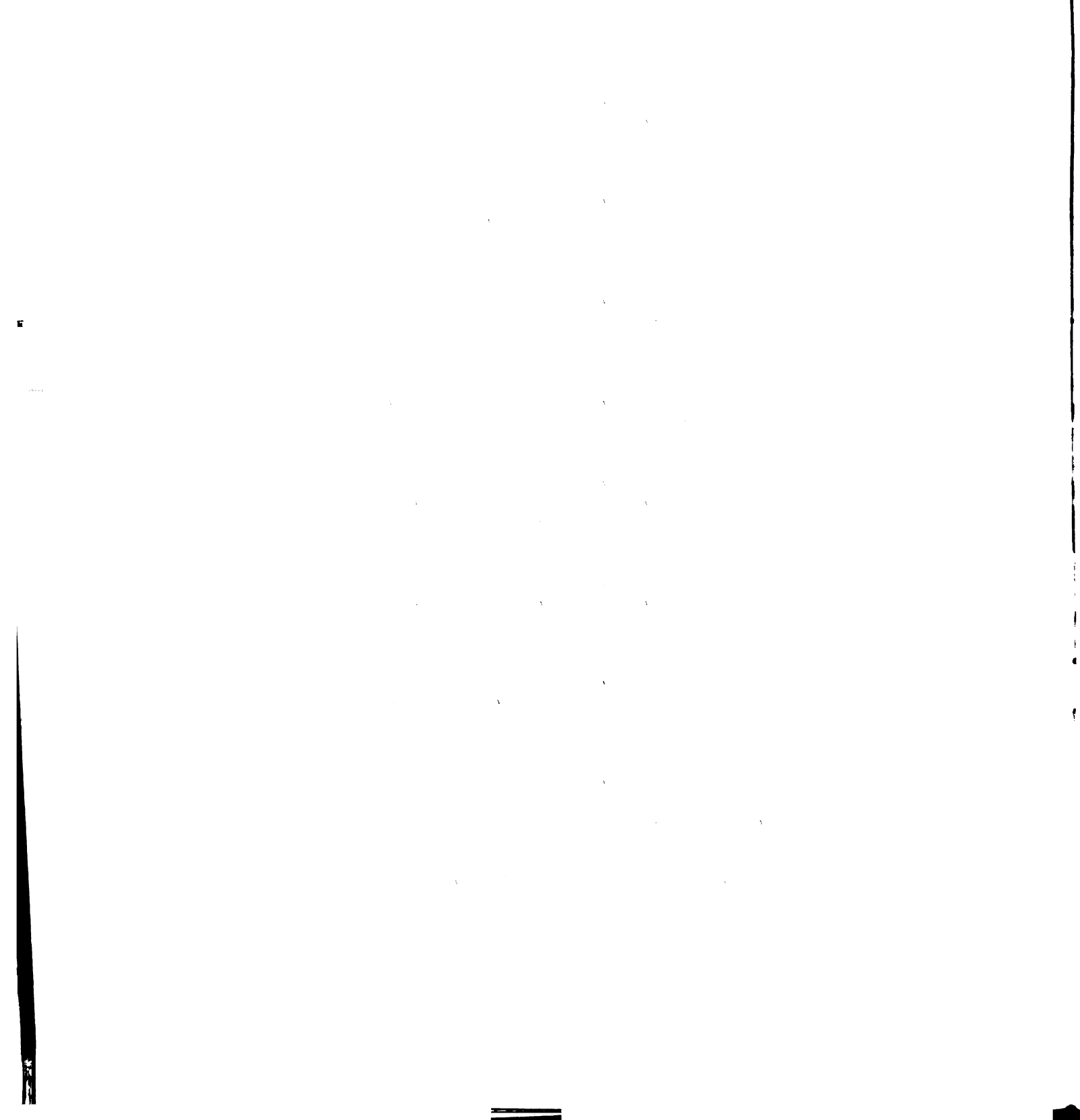
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