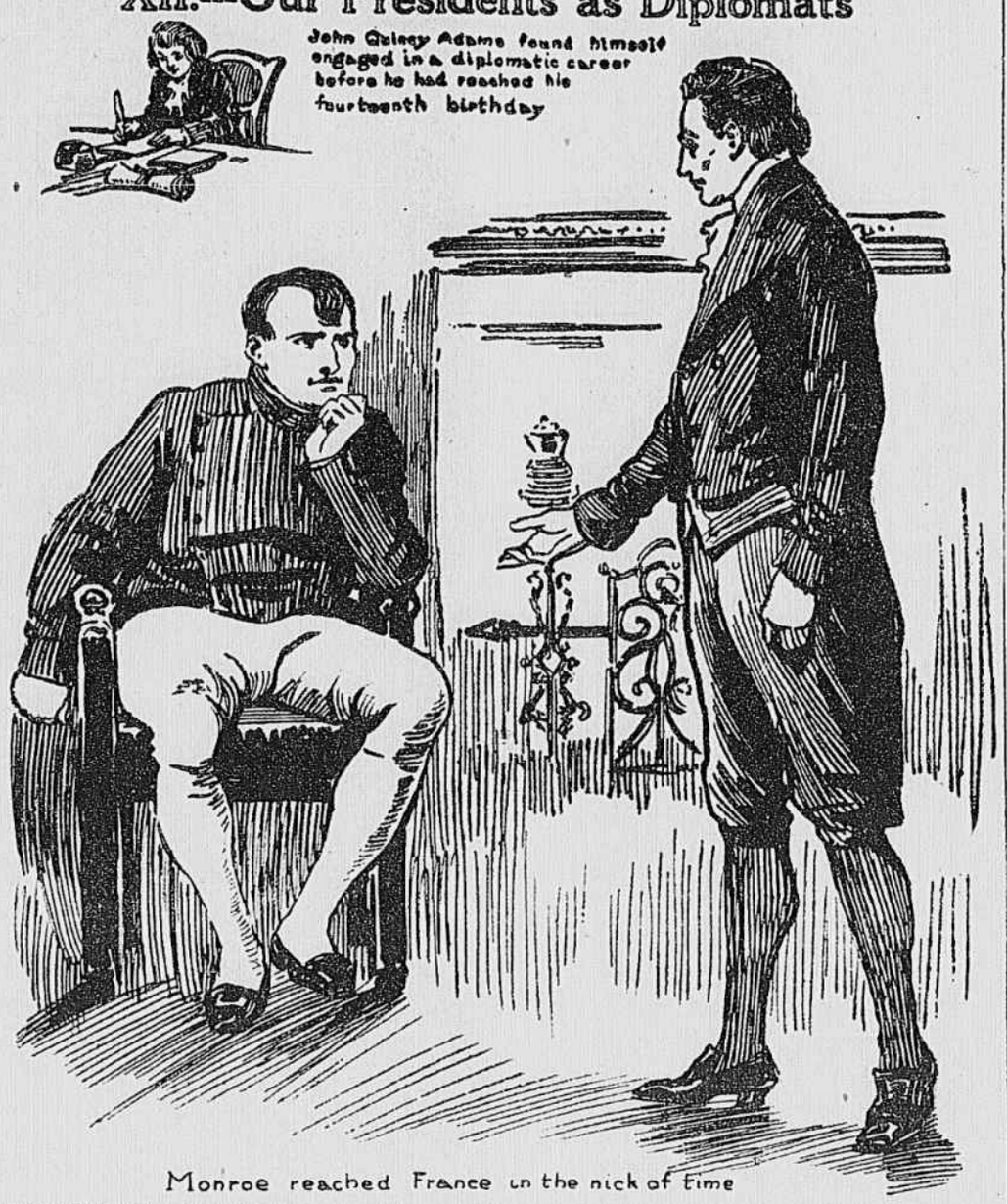
GETTING ACQUAINTED WITH OUR PRESIDENTS

By GEORGE H. PICARD

XII.—Our Presidents as Diplomats



Monroe reached France in the nick of time

JOHN ADAMS, the keen-witted and sagacious New England lawyer, who had prevailed on the American Colonies to accept Jefferson's Declaration of Independence, and later to put Washington at the head of the Continental Army, was first of those who have been our Presidents to go on a foreign mission. Precisely seventeen months after the declaration had been launched by the thirteen States, Adams was appointed commissioner to the court of France.

His impaired health had compelled him to resign from Congress and from the head of the War Department, which had involved enormous labor and responsibility. He was at home in Braintree, and had just resumed his practice of the law when the news of his appointment reached him. It was unwelcome news, but he did not shrink from the duty. He realized that it was an honor, but he knew also that it was a perilous one. The chances of his seizure by the British were by no means small, and he knew what to expect in case he should be captured on the high seas. The Continental Congress, too, knew the danger when it instructed him to have his dispatch bags sufficiently weighted to sink them instantly in case of capture.

John Adams's first foreign mission occupied about a year and a half, yet he had opportunity to show his ability as a diplomatist. Dr. Franklin had gone before him, and the alliance with France had already been made. Just at that time Franklin was the most popular American who had ever set foot in Paris. He had captivated all classes in France, and was being lionized in all quarters. Little attention was paid to Adams, and he was not the man to enjoy playing second fiddle. He reported to the home authorities that one commissioner was sufficient, and suggested that Franklin was the man for the place. His advice was followed, and Adams and his son, John Quincy, who had accompanied him to France, returned to America.

Adams reached home just in time to take a leading part in framing the new Constitution for Massachusetts. Then he was asked by the Continental Congress to accept the position of minister "to treat with Great Britain for peace and commerce." Again he packed his boxes, and with his two elder sons set sail in the very French frigate which had brought him home. The ship proved to be unseaworthy, and the three homesick Americans regarded themselves as fortunate in being landed on the coast of Spain. Having had enough of the sea for the time being, they made their way to Paris overland, a journey none of them ever forgot.

In Paris Mr. Adams's first diplomatic experiences were not encouraging. He didn't get on well with Comte de Vergennes, then at the head of French foreign affairs. The polished, autocratic Frenchman didn't like the outspoken and independent manner of the American. They disagreed in about every particular except one—both hated the British government, and it was that fact that kept them from open rupture. Adams lacked tact, and he didn't get on well with Dr. Franklin, who was still the popular idol in Paris. Disgusted with the prospect, the blunt American statesman resolved to go to Holland to negotiate a loan for his impoverished country.

Adams soon discovered that he had undertaken no easy task. The Dutch knew almost nothing about the Americans, and didn't take kindly to the idea of parting with their money without a better prospect of its return. Adams proceeded to educate them up to the loaning point, and was about to succeed, when Great Britain declared war against Holland. Of course, that upset everything, and Adams returned to Paris. Before he left he received notice of his appointment as minister to Holland in place of Henry Laurens, whom the British had captured and shut up in the Tower of London. When he reached Paris Adams found that the prospects of peace with Great Britain were not flattering. He didn't like De Vergennes any better than at first, and didn't care to do business with him. So he returned to Holland, despite the danger of being captured by the English.

This time he was more successful. The popular feeling against Great Britain and the news of the capture of Lord Cornwallis and his army had much to do with the change in Dutch sentiment for America. Adams took advantage of it to perform an act of splendid audacity. He presented a formal demand to the Dutch government to be recognized as the minister of an independent nation. Advanced in defiance of all the traditions of diplomacy, it might have been made to appear ridiculous, but the Yankee lawyer's sublime assurance won the day. On April 19, 1783, John Adams was installed American minister at The Hague.

A Notable Triumph of Diplomacy.

It was a great triumph of diplomacy. At that very moment England was insisting that no free and independent United States of America existed. Before the end of that year the new minister succeeded in borrowing $2,000,000 from the shrewd Amsterdam bankers, a loan that was of immense service to his practically bankrupt country. Soon after Adams rejoined his colleagues, Dr. Franklin and Mr. Jay, in Paris, and then began a period of endless debates, arguments and hair splitting. Through it all Adams was the one whose moral courage never flinched. Without the aid of the bold, determined Yankee statesman Mr. Jay could not have held his ground against the British commission. The treaty of peace was signed September 3, 1783.

Peace assured, Adams was anxious to return home and sent in his resignation. In reply, he received the intelligence that John Jay and himself had been appointed commissioners to negotiate a treaty of commerce with Great Britain. He was ill, but as soon as he was able he proceeded to London and was in Parliament on the day when George III. announced that he had made "a treaty of peace with the Colonies no longer, but now with the independent States of North America." A little later, still an invalid, he made a winter trip to Holland and actually obtained a fresh loan from the Dutch money brokers. Nearly in the spring he was chosen, with Jefferson and Franklin, to negotiate commercial treaties with various European powers. Then Mrs. Adams and his daughter joined him in France and they went to housekeeping at Auteuil. The following February he was appointed minister to England.

The position of the first American minister to Great Britain was not an agreeable one. The atmosphere was still hostile and critical and the salary was insufficient to meet the demands. Mr. Adams had built largely on the re-establishment of cordial relations between the two countries, but he was doomed to disappointment. England had not yet forgiven America for her victories in the field and she was jealous of commercial rivalry. The court treated the new minister with marked insolence and the Queen snubbed Mrs. Adams on every possible occasion. By 1788 Adams declared he had had enough of it, and resigned and sailed for home. He never again set foot on a foreign shore.

In the autum following the Declaration of Independence, when Thomas Jefferson was in the full tide of public life, he was appointed by Congress, with Dr. Franklin and Silas Deane, to represent the United States at Paris. To a young man of thirty-three the offer was a dazzling one, but Mrs. Jefferson's health made it impossible for her to accompany her husband, and he declined the mission. It was not until 1783 that Congress sent him as envoy to France for two years, with a salary of $9,000 per annum. Mrs Jefferson was dead, Monticello was unbearable without her and the disconsolate statesman was only too glad to leave it and its heartbreaking memories.

At that time Americans were certain of a cordial reception in France. The Declaration of Independence had thrilled the French people as no other human document had ever moved them. Jefferson was to succeed Dr. Franklin, and he at once fell heir to a share of the unbounded popularity of that beloved statesman and philosopher. At his first interview with De Vergennes, who was still in office, the polished Frenchman observed suavely, "You succeed Dr. Franklin." "I succeed—no one can replace him," returned the equally courteous Jefferson.

Even under such favorable circumstances the new envoy found his position far from satisfactory. He could not speak fluently in French and it was not easy to acquire facility in the language at his age. Again, his salary—generous as it had seemed in America—was totally inadequate to maintain the establishment of a minister. The most distinguished persons of the court met under his hospitable roof, and in order to entertain properly he was compelled to draw largely on his own private resourses.

Jefferson's original two years' service lengthened into five. During that time he worked unceasingly to secure a more liberal commercial treaty between the two nations. When not engaged in the duties of his office, he seems to have conducted a species of agricultural propaganda, eager to introduce American productions into Europe and untiring in his efforts to obtain specimens if the fauna and flora of his own country for propagation in France. He also wanted to introduce every valuable product and implement of the Old World to the New, and with his passion for agriculture was "always sending home grass seed, plants, roots, acorns—anything novel in the vegetable world which he fancied might flourish in his native soil."

English Society Snubs Thomas Jefferson.

When he had been in France two years, Jefferson went over to London to assist John Adams in negotiating commercial treaties. At that period the social atmosphere was anything but congenial to Americans. The man who had written the Declaration of Independence and the man who had persuaded him to write it could not expect to be received with loud popular acclaim, and they were not so welcomed. It didn't take Jefferson long to discover that his part in the negotiation would be an exceedingly small one, and in less than two months after he set foot on British soil he was back again in hospital Paris. Long years afterward, in his quiet home at Monticello, the American statesman must have recalled that illustrious company which passed over the threshold of his Paris salon and remembered with a pang how many of them had been victims of the cruel guillotine.

Jefferson was on the spot to witness the breaking out of the French revolution, he was present at the assembly of the notables in 1787 and saw the destruction of the Bastile in 1789. Lafayette and all the other leaders in these great national events were his associates and warm friends. They sought his sympathy and advice, but all his passion for liberty did not overthrow his judgment. Never once did he forget, amid all the excitement of that trying period, that he was the American republic and pledged to look out for its best interests. He could people were ready for the large measure of freedom which his own countrymen had secured, and subsequent events proved the soundness of his judgment. Before the comparative moderation of the early days of the uprising had fled before anarchy, Jefferson was called home to Monticello by the marriage of his eldest daughter to her cousin, Thomas Mann Randolph. He obtained leave of absence for six months, expecting and wishnot persuade himself that the Frenching to return at the expiration of his leave. Before that time President Washington wanted him for his Secretary of State, and he never visited Europe again, although Lafayette and a score of other celebrities whom he had known abroad were guests at Monticello in after years.

James Monroe's appointment as minister to France was a genuine surprise, both to himself and to his friends. From the first he had been an active sympathizer with the French in their struggle for freedom and had opposed Washington's proclamation of neutrality between England and France. The French had become embittered against the American people on account of their lukewarmness during the Revolution, and now that the dire period was drawing to a close Washington was anxious to re-establish the old friendly relations. It was for that reason that he chose his young friend James Monroe to bring about the reconciliation.

Monroe reached Paris at the most critical moment of its history. The horror of the Revolution was still in the air. Thus far the French republic had received no foreign minister, and Monroe waited more than a week without a sign of recognition from any source. Then he addressed a letter announcing his embassy to the president of the national convention. That letter had the desired effect. The minister was invited to present himself before the national convention.

When Monroe Failed to Be Diplomatic.

That afternoon of August 15, 1796, was never forgotten by the young Virginia patriot whom President Washington had assigned to the difficult position. All around him in that national convention were those who had borne leading parts in the terrors of the Revolution, those who had defied Robespierre and sent him to the guillotine. As he rose to his feet Monroe received an ovation that convinced him he had nothing to fear at the hands of those men who had overthrown the government and had established one of their own. The president of the convention made a speech glowing with praise and warm with affection for America and Americans. The flags of the republic were intertwined to attest to the close union of the two nations.

When it came Monroe's turn to reply to the welcoming address there was the stillness of death as he rose slowly and faced the tribune. What, after all, had this boyish-looking American to say to the assembled delegates of the French people? What message had he borne to them across the sea? It was a situation that had no precedent, and this first foreign minister to be recognized by the French republic must be his own judge as to the appropriateness of his words. Would he prove himself equal to the occasion?

Influenced by the excitement and emotion of such a moment, it is small wonder that the ardent young Virginian was almost carried off his feet. His speech was sympathetic enough in its general tone to fill the hearts of those grim revolutionists with rampant joy. The cheers which his enthusiasm provoked were carried across the channel and excited deep resentment in the breasts of our recent foe. They were wafted also over the ocean and stirred up great hostility in the Federal party, which demanded the instant recall of the orator.

Shortly afterward he was recalled and was received with great honor by the Republican leaders at Philadelphia. When Jefferson came to the presidency, he sent Monroe to the legation at Paris to promote a scheme which he had long had at heart. The President had made up his mind that if diplomacy could effect it the United States should become the owner of the vast territory of Louisiana. Shortly before, Spain had ceded Louisiana to France. Monroe reached France in the nick of time. Bonaparte wanted money quite as badly as Jefferson wanted the new territory. There was a little haggling over the price, but in less than a month's time the sale was consummated, the price being $15,000,000. It was largely through Monroe's influence that the sale was made, and he always regarded it as the most important of his public services.

Thence Monroe was ordered to England, and found it difficult to do business with the government. His mission also took him to Spain, where he tried to settle the eastern boundaries of Louisiana, but failed. Returning to England, he set to work to obtain a treaty, and after long and trying labor succeeded. It was unsatisfactory to Jefferson, and he refused to ratify it. Disgusted with the whole business, Monroe returned home and was Secretary of State during the War of 1812.

John Quincy Adams found himself engaged in a diplomatic career before he had reached his fourteenth birthday. Francis Dana, envoy to Russia from the United States, actually appointed the boy his private secretary and took him to St. Petersburg, where he remained in service over a year, rejoining his father in Paris, where the latter was engaged in diplomatic work. While his father was minister to England, young Adams returned to America and was graduated from Harvard and afterward studied law. On his twenty-seventh birthday Washington appointed him minister to The Hague, and the President was so impressed with his ability that he ventured the prophecy that Adams would soon be found at the head of the diplomatic corps. Next he went to England on a special mission of "a delicate and confidential character." At the close of Washington's administration he was sent as minister to Portugal. One of the last acts of his father's administration was to recall him.

Madison Sent to Tame the Russian Bear

Two days after Madison was inaugurated, he named young Adams for the Russian mission. His enemies voted "no Russian mission," and three months later Madison repeated the experiment, with the result that his wishes prevailed. He remained in St. Petersburg four years and a half, acting as one of the five American commissioners who negotiated the treaty of Ghent between the United States and England. From Russia he went as minister to London, thus fulfilling Washington's prophecy. He remained in the British mission two years, returning to America to become Monroe's Secretary of State.

Martin Van Buren is reputed to have "directed and controlled political forces" in such a way as to secure the election of General Jackson. The latter made the New York statesman his Secretary of State and later gave him the British mission. Van Buren proceeded to London and found a cruel mortification awaiting him—the Senate had declined to ratify his nomination. Van Buren took his defeat pluckily and returned to America to receive higher political honors than ever, but not of a diplomatic nature.

On the election of Franklin Pierce to the presidency James Buchanan was appointed minister to England. At the court of St. James he was a dignified and decidedly imposing figure and made many warm friends. In his diplomatic ventures, however, he was not entirely successful, coming perilously near involving the United States in a war with Spain in the discussion over Cuba. From the English point of view, Buchanan was "the best example of an adroit and educated diplomat ever sent over from the other side." That is high praise from high authority, but it does not coincide with the American view.

Since Buchanan no President has filled the position of accredited American representative at a foreign seat of government, but the services of President Taft in the delicate matter of the pacification of the Philippines and the equally skilful adjustment of difficulties in the vicinity of the Panama Canal Zone must not be omitted from the consideration.

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WARRENTON

(Special to The Times-Dispatch.)

Warrenton, Va., April 6.—Mr. and Mrs. Edwin B. King, of the Gilliam Country School, Baltimore, Md., are in Warrenton for the Easter holidays and are the guests of Mr. and Mrs. Albert Fletcher, Jr.

Mr. and Mrs. Walter F. Bishop have returned from a visit to Washington and are the guests of Mrs. W. T. Willis.

Mrs. William N. Wilbur, of Devon, Pa., is the guest of Mr. and Mrs. William F. Wilbur for the holidays and races.

Miss Lucy Spilman, of "The Dell," is the guest of Mrs. R. W. Hilleary for the week.

Mrs. Ford Holt has returned to her home in Warrenton after a visit of several weeks to Richmond, Camden, S. C., and Summerville, S. C.

Miss Annie Camden Spilman is spending some time in New York.

Mrs. W. T. Willis was the guest of her daughter, Mrs. William White, in Washington for several days the past week.

The Civic League of Warrenton held an important meeting at the Warren Green Hotel on Tuesday of this week.

Beverly Wertheimer, a student at the Episcopal High School, near Alexandria, is spending the Easter holidays with his mother, Mrs. E. D. Wertheimer.

Miss Mary Nelson returned on Saturday last to her home here after a visit of several weeks to New York.

Wm. Chaddoc, of the Gilliam Country School, is spending some time with H. Spilman, at Mrs. Murray Forbes.

Mrs. Herbert Graham, Jr., is at Mrs. Garner's after an absence of several weeks spent in Cambridge, Md.

Hugh Spilman left this week for Richmond, where he will be the guest of Taylor Scott.

Mrs. Robert L. Bailey left this week for Columbia, S. C., after a visit of several weeks to Mr. and Mrs. D. P. Wood.

Miss Virginia Hilleary has returned home, after visiting friends in Brooklyn, N. Y.

Ed Weids, of New York, is a guest of Mr. and Mrs. Gwyn Tompkins, at Glenbarnie Farm, near Warrenton.

Mrs. H. T. Ramey, of Washington, is spending some time with Mr. Ramey at the Warren Green Hotel.

A. C. Humphries, of Norfolk, spent several days this week at Mrs. Hilleary's, with Mrs. Humphries.

Mrs. M. G. Douglas left this week for Atlanta, Ga., where she will be the guest of Mrs. Howell Peeples.

Miss Susan Groome and Mrs. H. C. Groome, of "Airlie," near Warrenton, left this week for Philadelphia, where they will spend some time.

Mrs. L. J. Kerr, of Washington, visited Warrenton the past week.

Colonel and Mrs. J. H. Dorst and Master Warrington Dorst are at home in Warrenton, after spending some time in Florida.

The talk given at the Warrenton Library on Thursday was largely patronized.

Invitations have been received here to the marriage of Miss Eliza Drayton Chisholm, daughter of Mrs. Alfred Chisolm, formerly of Warrenton, and John T. Melver, which will take place on the 16th inst. at Christ Church, Savannah, Ga. Miss Chisolm has spent much time in Warrenton as the guest of her cousins, Mrs. Albert Fletcher, Jr., and Mrs. William F. Wilbur.

Miss Helen Taft, of Washington; Miss Gladys Ingalls, of Cincinnati, who is spending the winter in Washington; Dr. Carey Grayson and Captain Symington, of the Mayflower, and Lieutenant A. Andrews, U. S. N., arrived in Warrenton on Wednesday afternoon, and while in Warrenton were the guests of Mrs. James K. Maddux at Leeton Hill. On Wednesday afternoon the party was entertained at tea by Mrs. Maddux, who also gave a dinner in the evening. Besides the party and hostess, Mr. and Mrs. Courtland H. Smith, Mr. and Mrs. Grafton Beall and Mr. and Mrs. Richard Wallach were present. Thursday morning the party, together with a number of members of the Warrenton Hunt Club, was out for a fox hunt, returning to Leeton Hill for luncheon. The luncheon guests, besides Mrs. Maddux, Miss Taft, Miss Ingalls, Captain Symington, Dr. Carey Grayson and Lieutenant Andrews, were Mrs. F. A. B. Portman, Mr. and Mrs. William F. Wilbur and Miss Annie Camden Spilman. Thursday afternoon an exhibition of jumping and schooling of the handsome horses from the stables of Mr. and Mrs. Maddux was given in the paddock of Leeton Hill, after which Mrs. Marshall entertained the guests at tea. The party returned to Washington on Thursday afternoon.

Mrs. Lenard Horner and little daughter, of New Haven, Conn., are the guests of Mr. and Mrs. Julian C. Keith, near Warrenton. Captain Davis, Major Ryan, U. S. A., and Mr. Cole, of New York, have recently been guests of Mr. and Mrs. Keith.

Roy Wilson left Warrenton on Monday and will be out of town for some time.

The Warrenton Social Club gave an "April Fool" dance in their hall on Monday night.

A. R. Anderson, R. L. Moser, Wm. Sudduth and Eugene Davis will attend a dance in Manassas on Monday next.

Miss Connie and Miss Dorothy Hordern are at home near Warrenton from Washington for the Easter holidays.

Miss Willie M. Garner has returned to Warrenton after a visit to Washington and Charlottesville.

Mrs. Wm. Armstrong, of Norfolk, is the guest of Colonel and Mrs. R. A. McIntyre, on the Alexandria Pike.

Mrs. Sidney Shumate, of Calverton, visited Mr. and Mrs. A. W. Strother this week.

Miss Ruth Wertheimer is at home from Mrs. Nourse's School for the Easter holidays.