The Attitude of John Quincy Adams Toward the Presidency

Helen Tichenor

Loyola University Chicago

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THE ATTITUDE
OF
JOHN QUINCY ADAMS
TOWARD
THE PRESIDENCY
BY
Mother Helen Tichonor, R.S.C.J.

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Bibliographical Essay
Theodore Parker, a leading Protestant minister of the nineteenth century, makes an interesting comment in a funeral address preached at Boston in memory of John Quincy Adams, on an obvious classification of great men. There are, he says, the Discoverers of truth at first hand, whether it be the truth of literature or politics, of philosophy or religion. These are the men who blaze the trail, who force their way into the depths of unknown forests, and who, because of their prophet's vision and explorer's courage, lay the foundation of empires. Following upon the Discoverers come the Organizers, - men of constructive minds, who form the institutions of the world upon these foundations, and who are the Napoleons, great and little, of history. Last of all in time and in greatness, come the Administrators of what the first and second have accomplished, men of good common sense, who carry on in a practical and efficient way the ideal seen by the first and adopted by the second.  

In this third class, the orator placed John Quincy Adams. At first thought the reader is inclined to disagree. Efficiency connotes success

and few would call the Administration of the sixth President of the United States a success. Not even on second thought, but only after some depth of investigation, does one commence to realize that John Quincy Adams was indeed a great administrator, gifted in mind and character with all that such a title implies. True, he himself failed in the office. In all that lay dearest to his heart his purposes were defeated. He failed of re-election and went out of office in a storm of unpopularity. But this was a failure due largely to circumstances over which he had no control, a failure that may well be forgotten in the memory of the services he rendered to the eight more successful administrators with whom he was contemporaneous.

Administrators, in the strict sense of the term, are not innovators but inheritors. With their inheritance, they govern, - and their responsibility lies in their unswervingly faithful interpretation of the Constitutions by which they rule. To use the word interpretation is immediately to imply that the inheritance is twofold. Constitutions are lifeless unless they are interpreted, and the administrator must bring his own training to his interpretation. In his training will lie the roots of his attitude. This first chapter, then, on "The Attitude of John Quincy Adams toward the Presidency," must necessarily review his early education.

In a letter to Mr. George Bancroft, written from Quincy in October, 1835, he states his theory of good government. Though Adams wrote this letter when he was an old man, it may well be quoted in this chapter, for he based it on Aristotle's definitions of the three simple forms of government, - definitions he had learned in Greek at the age of eleven.  

2. The Writings of John Quincy Adams, W.C. Ford, II, 189.
first form, according to Aristotle, is democracy, the government of the people, a good form, whose danger is to descend into ochlocracy, or the government of the mob. The second is aristocracy, the government of the best, - also a good form, but with its corresponding danger of descending into oligarchy, the government of the few. In this event, the few will inevitably be the rich and therefore the ruling power of the aristocratic State is Property. The third of Aristotle's forms is monarchy, - the government of one according to the laws of the land, and its danger is despotism.

"Now the theory of good government which I have imbibed from childhood," continues John Quincy Adams, "which I was taught by the instructions of my father, which I learnt in every stage of the history of mankind, which the French Revolution at the dawn of my political life brought up again by experiment, and which, from that day to this, has been tested by a continual succession of experiments by almost every civilized nation in Europe, all terminating in the same results, fixing it upon my mind as an oracle of Holy Writ, is a government compounded of the three elements, - a government instituted for the protection both of persons and of property, to secure alike the rights of persons and of things. The right of property is a natural right as much as the right of life, which is merely personal, but as the earth was given by the Creator to mankind in common, the distribution of property within it is left to be settled among the human race by physical force or by argument, compact, or covenant. This I take it to be the origin of government. It is founded on persons and on property. And if Democracy is founded exclusively on persons and not on property, I fear it will follow the tendency of its nature and degenerate into ochlocracy and Lynch Law, burning down convents, and hanging Abolitionists or gamblers, without judge or jury, without fear of God to restrain, and without remorse to punish." 

"A compound of the three elements," - does he mean to say a union of the aristocracy of the North with the monarchism of the South will result in the democracy he champions? He goes on in this letter to indicate that the division between the party believing government to be founded upon property may be found running almost in parallel lines through the whole of our early history, and he concludes with an eloquent plea for "the true theory of government" which provides alike for the protection and security both of persons and property.4

Here it would seem is the crux of his greatness and his failure. Freedom from party spirit - not from political parties, these he believed were beneficial to a democracy,5 - union of North and South, in order that the general good of the United States might result, these were ideals unattainable in the age in which he lived. A man who advocated either was bound to receive a full measure of opposition; a man who labored for both would be overwhelmed with opprobrium, but, nevertheless, respected as one untainted with corruption. So it was with John Quincy Adams.

He was born at Braintree, Massachusetts, July 11, 1767, and in his veins flowed not only the blood of the strangely gifted Adams family, but a limitless quantity of the inflexible determination of the Northern colonist. Mr. Parker, in the address already quoted, has given a fine comparison of the respective genius of the North and South. The North, he says, labors to get empire over nature; all tends to that with the object of gaining wealth, not by plunder, but by productive work. To gain this dominion there must be universal education; otherwise there is not enough intelligent industry.

4. Ibid., 247
which alone secures that dominion. With widespread intelligence, property becomes widely distributed, as do suffrage and civil power. Thus the North subdues nature by thought, and Mr. Parker points with pride to the increase of wealth signified by Northern railroads, ships, mills, and shops, as well as Northern colleges, schools and churches. Northern men, he concludes, become mechanics, merchants, farmers, lawyers, clergymen, - but not politicians except from the necessity of the case. Estimating place by money, not by power, they would rather be collectors than Senators. With them political life is an accident, never an end.  

But in the South the aim is to get dominion over man, and accordingly the whole working population must be in subjection - in slavery. The North makes brute nature half intelligent; The South makes human nature half brute, - the man becomes the thing. For the South, talent tends to politics, not trade. Young men of ability go to the army, the navy, the public offices, diplomatic posts. They learn to manage men, and all else is accidental and subordinate. They mingle with men, have bland and agreeable manner, are frank, honorable, manly and persuasive. The young man of the North seeks a fortune; the young man of the South, reputation and political power.  

Looked at from this viewpoint, John Quincy Adams' failure as president is not surprising. Of the first eight presidents only three were Northerners. Each served only one term, and had little political influence, while all of the five Southerners were twice elected. Rhode Island could manage a cotton factory, but South Carolina could manage Congress, and as  

7. Ibid., 13-20.
a consequence, the North failed in politics and grew rich, while the South succeeded in politics and grew poor.

Inevitably there came that division spoken of by John Quincy Adams in his letter to Mr. Bancroft: - the South believed government to be founded upon persons, the North believed government to be founded upon property; and Adams, the Northerner, who believed it to be founded upon both, faced a problem on which a lesser man would have compromised.

Compromise he did not. His own attitude may be inferred from the instructions he gives for State Legislatures:

"It is not through the medium of personal sensibility, nor of party bias, nor of professional occupation, nor of geographical position, that the whole truth can be discerned of questions involving the rights and interests of this extensive Union." 8

There again one may infer that this doctrine, stated in later life, was inculcated in childhood. The elder Adams could throw party prejudice to the winds; the United States is everlastingly indebted to him for having done so upon two occasions.

He it was who dared to propose to Congress the Virginian, George Washington, as commander-in-chief of the unorganized, nondescript forces besieging General Gage in Boston, and by this assumption of responsibility, and this independent judgment, to solve the problem of nationalizing a Massachusetts army and binding the North and South indissolubly in a common cause. 9

Years later, when Adams was President of the nation he had thus

made possible, he appointed John Marshall Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. In so doing he gave the country its fundamental law, for the Constitution of the United States today is what it is by virtue of 10 Marshall's interpretation.

John Adams the elder was an organizer. He forced the Declaration of Independence through Congress in spite of Dickinson's plan for delay; his constructive statesmanship laid the Constitutional foundations for the new nation. His pamphlet, "Thoughts on Government," - with its convincing exposition of the benefits of an independent executive, legislature and judiciary; of complete freedom of conscience and of speech; of a "government of laws and not of men," - was the father, not only of the Federal Constitution, but of all the newly born State Constitutions as well. 12

We may say, then, that John Quincy Adams inherited the Constitution from his father. He was destined to administer the government that his father, in so great measure, had organized. Being an administrator by temperament, far more than by election, it was natural that he "imbibed", to use his own expression, all that was offered to him during his youth, of theory and example, - and probably no boy ever had a more copious draught.

At the age of ten, in the year 1778, he listened with precocious enjoyment to the conversations of his father and Benjamin Franklin concerning the French treaty they were commissioned to make, 13 and after a

10. Ibid., 112-113.
12. Ibid., 49.
sojourn of a year and a half in Paris, returned to the United States for a
stay of three months before embarking again with his father, who was this
time commissioned by Congress to negotiate the treaty of peace with England. The thirteen-year-old John was put to school with his younger brother Charles at the University of Leyden, then, according to their father, "as learned a University as any in Europe," and by way of filling up their measure of instruction, he wrote them letters of appalling length and erudition which quite justify William H. Seward's comment: "One cannot turn over a page of the domestic history of John Adams without finding a precept or example the influence of which is manifested in the character of his illustrious son." 

Unquestionably the boy was remarkable. In July, 1781, Francis Dana, who had attended John Adams as Secretary of the Legation, was appointed Minister to Russia, and the fourteen-year-old John Quincy Adams was nominated Private Secretary of this mission. His first letter to his father from St. Petersburg is dated August 21, 1781, and gives an account of the journey from Amsterdam, a distance of 2,400 miles. Almost every detail in this letter, as well as in others of the same time, is concerned with the government of the countries he had passed through. The following is a typical passage, and interesting in view of his own later ideas of civic

"This (Berlin) is a very pretty town, much more so than Paris or London, as Mr. Dana says; but it will be still more so if the present King's (Frederick II, the Great) plan is adopted by his successor, for wherever there is a row of low, small houses, he sends the owners out of them, pulls them down, and has large, elegant houses built in the same place, and then sends the owners in again. But notwithstanding this, he is not loved in Berlin, and everybody says publicly what he pleases against the King; but as long as they do not go further than words, he don't take any notice of it, but says that as long as they give him all he asks they may say what they will. But they have great reason to complain of him for he certainly treats them like slaves ...."

And he goes on to explain the law of primogeniture and the enforced enlistment of all younger sons in the King's army.

His fourteen months in the Court of Catherine II, the Great, were busy ones. The French Ambassador at St. Petersburg, the Marquis de Verac, could not speak English, nor Dana, French, and young Adams proved of service. He makes no comment on Russian court life, and yet he was profoundly influenced by it. French philosophers were plentiful at the Court of Catherine the Great; it was the day of Diderot; and the boy read voluminously.

Here, for the first time, he read Voltaire; having been brought up in the Congregationalist creed, John Quincy Adams may or may not have believed in the Divinity of Christ. The differentiation between the Congregationalist Church and its sister, the Presbyterian, is in the matter of doctrine on that point; in matter of discipline, the Congregationalists lay.

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19. Ibid., I, 10.
claim to wider democracy. Because of that democracy, doubtless, they are given complete freedom of conscience to believe as they desire. Just what he did believe, then, is difficult to determine. Because his mother, admirable though she was, advised him to read Voltaire, we may imply that she had not taught him to honor Christ as Divine. Because of his own words, written years later, we may imply that he was quite untouched by the Deism of which Voltaire was the exponent.

"There is one form of democracy in which I am a humble but firm believer, and that is the democracy of Jesus and His Apostles. The democracy of the Sermon on the Mount; of Romans XII; of I Corinthians, 13th, 14th and 15th chapters. By which I mean a democracy of duties always correlative to the democracy of rights. I can trust no democracy not imbedded in a profound sense of moral and religious obligation. The ancient democracies of Athens and Rome therefore delight not me. As little do I admire the democracies of Thomas Paine, Marat and Robespierre. Paine was a blaspheming infidel, Marat was an atheist, Robespierre a Deist whose God was a political machine; neither of the three was a Christian."21

Yet between the boyhood in which he read Voltaire and the old age in which he denounced Voltaire's chief disciple, he had suffered much, and had perhaps learned thus to retract statements he is said to have made in regard to his disbelief in the divinity of Christ. Two ministers, Mr. Stedman W. Hanks, and Mr. Frederick Farley, testify to this disbelief; Mr. Hanks, as pastor of the John Street Congregational Church in Lowell, commending him for his belief in the Crucified, and not the Divine, Savior;22

and Mr. Farley of a New York City Protestant Episcopal Church, condemning
the error with the Christian excuse of want of sufficient instruction. 23
Certainly there does seem to be something of Voltaire's Deism in the
religious tenets of Adams' middle age, although what that something is
would probably be as difficult as unprofitable to set forth historically.
Intuitively, a Christian would explain Adams' religious problems as those
of a high-principled man struggling against the temptation of doubt, a
temptation that may well have been brought on by familiarity with the most
insidious of unbelievers, Voltaire.

"I have this day," Adams confided to his
diary five years before his death, "been
debarred by my disease (catarrh) from the
privilege of attendance upon public worship,
and felt it with deep mortification. The
time has been, chiefly in foreign countries,
when I have too long intermitted the duty of
that attendance. Of this I charge myself,
especially when in Holland, in Berlin, in
St. Petersburg, and last in France. For
this I blame myself; but the importance of
regular attendance upon the duties of the
Christian Sabbath in social Communion has
impressed itself more deeply on my mind in
proportion as I have advanced in years." 24

The places which stand out in his memory are not without significance:
Holland, where he lived from 1794 to 1797 as Minister, had been for years
not only the printing office but the rallying ground of the French philo-

23. Frederick Farley, Sermon in Memory of John Quincy Adams, New York City,
1848, 2.
to be more Parisian than Paris; and last of all, France herself, who had kindled all the world by the torch of her enlightenment, was called by him the mother of his youth.

His diary continues:

"I have at all times been a sincere believer in the existence of a Supreme Creator of the world, of an immortal principle within myself, responsible to that Creator for my conduct upon earth, and of the divine mission of the Crucified Savior, proclaiming immortal life and preaching peace on earth, good will to men, the natural equality of all mankind, and the law: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself'. Of all these articles of faith ... I entertain involuntary and agonizing doubts, which I can neither silence nor expel, and against which I need for my own comfort to be fortified and sustained by stated and frequent opportunities of receiving religious admonition and instruction." 25

That he sought this strength more frequently in Protestant Episcopal Churches 26 may mean nothing but a vagary of democracy. Although a member of the Congregational Church, he did attend Protestant churches of several denominations in his later years and this was interpreted as a mark of broadmindedness by the chroniclers who mention it. Yet, we are free to make connections in history when we cannot draw conclusions, and an interesting connection can be made here. In the examination of conscience quoted above, he has no regrets about the years he spent in England. England had few illusions with regard to Voltaire and eighteenth century enlightenment. One may surmise that to set foot on her shores was to safeguard oneself from occasions of European sin. If Pitt the Younger could turn back the tide of

democracy in England for fear that it would sweep over the government as it had in France, this check was possible partly because religion, and consequently civil authority, had not been undermined in England as they had been on the continent. Eighteenth century Englishmen were churchgoers; quite evidently when Adams was in England, he was a churchgoer too. Where he attended service we do not know, but it is curious that in his old age he should single out, what was in his day, the most English of all the Protestant Sects.

Voltaire's philosophy, so much in vogue on the continent, comprised four major beliefs and was in some degree a popularizing of the writings of John Locke, an Englishman more famous abroad than at home. Two of these beliefs were definitely erroneous; one was decidedly undemocratic; one was true. Traces of all of them can be found in John Quincy Adams' philosophy and career.

Enough has been said of Voltaire's Deism. The second of his false doctrines was his belief in the ability of a thoughtful person like himself to reason out completely the "natural laws" which, he taught, were the sole explanation of human nature, religion, Society, the State, and the universe in general. If John Quincy Adams had been accused of rationalism, he might indignantly have denied the imputation. Yet the discouragement with which he surveyed his life is rooted in his belief in his own capability. Almost the last entry in his diary is a pathetic confirmation of his disillusionment, although it is also an exhibition of scandalous conceit.

"If my intellectual powers had been such as have been sometimes committed by the Creator of man to single individuals of the species, my diary would have been, next to the Holy
Scriptures, the most precious and valuable book ever written by human hands, and I should have been one of the greatest benefactors of my country and of mankind. I would, by the irresistible power of genius and the irrepressible energy of will and the favor of Almighty God, have banished war and slavery from the face of the earth forever. But the conceptive power of mind was not conferred upon me by my Maker, and I have not improved the scanty portion of His gifts as I might and ought to have done." 27

His was not the rationalism which never turned to God. Neither was Voltaire's. Both turned to God for His approval of the plans of their finite minds, not in submission to His infinite designs.

In the third place Voltaire believed that existing society and government were in need of reform, but he would entrust reform to enlightened princes rather than to the people at large. This idea was not wholly lost on John Quincy Adams. Living as he did, not only in the period of the enlightened rulers, but in their very realms, he seems to have imbibed some of their spirit, and he was conscious of it. 28 He lived in Europe, in diplomatic association with her governments, the greater part of the time from 1778 until 1818, when he became Secretary of State under President Monroe. With these dates it is interesting to compare those of the reigns of the Sovereigns frequently designated as "Enlightened Despots."

1. Frederick II, the Great, of Prussia 1740-1786
2. Catherine II, the Great, of Russia 1762-1796
3. Charles III of Spain 1759-1788
4. Emperor Joseph II of Austria 1765-1790
5. Gustavus III of Sweden 1771-1791
6. Alexander I of Russia 1801-1825

In that period of his boyhood with which we are now concerned, - his

residence at the Court of Catherine II of Russia, during the years 1781 and
1782, - although he was only fourteen years old, he could give a clear and
accurate analysis of the Russian Government. To him it was "the most
despotical in the world," and to prove his assertion he compared it with the
governments of other European countries. 29 Though he disliked the despotism
of Russia, absolutism was not necessarily a thing to be abhorred, if we may
judge from the following letter written to his mother:

"Sweden is the country in Europe which pleases me the most, that is, of those I have seen,
because their manners resemble more those of our own country than any I have seen. The
King (Gustavus III) is a man of great ability. In the space of one day, from being the most
dependent, he rendered himself one of the most absolute monarchs of Europe. But he is ex-
tremely popular, and has persuaded his people that they are free, and that he has only
restored them their ancient constitution."30

In frequent comments he makes upon the autocrats of Europe, never
does he denounce autocracy in itself. If he denounces a ruler, it is
because, like Frederick the Great, he treats his people as slaves in some
respects: 31 because the ruler himself is incapable, as Christian VII of
Denmark; 32 or because autocracy has degenerated into despotism as in
Russia. 33

29. Letter to Abigail Adams, Sept. 10, 1783, W.C. Ford, The Writings of
30. Ibid., I, 8.
Q. Adams, I, 5.
On the contrary, absolute power seems to have held for him a certain fascination. He was much elated in 1785 to have received an invitation to be present at the solemn Te Deum sung at the Cathedral of Notre Dame in honor of the birth of Marie Antoinette's second son, the future Louis XVII. Of the ceremony he wrote:

"What a charming sight! - an absolute King of one of the most powerful Empires upon earth, and perhaps one thousand of the first personages of that Empire, adoring the Divinity Who created them!"34

Yet that admiration for power does not seem to have developed into a craving. He could note in his diary, shortly after he had received the appointment of Ambassador to Holland:

"June 3, 1794. I had laid down as a principle, that I would never solicit for any public office whatever, and from this determination no necessity has hitherto compelled me to swerve."35

His attitude toward holding office was such consistently throughout his life. "Never seek it, never refuse it,"36 was his comment, when in 1830 he was asked by the farmers of the Plymouth congressional district whether he would accept nomination by them as a Candidate for Congress. Many in the United States deemed it impossible that one who had occupied positions so elevated, who had received the highest honors the nation could bestow upon him, would consent to serve the people of a single district, in a capacity so humble, comparatively, as a Representative in Congress. Yet they, who had in years past branded him as undemocratic, monarchical, were to find themselves once more mistaken. Elected and re-elected to Congress

35. Ibid., I, 31.
36. Seward, Life of John Q. Adams, 244.
he was to serve his country in that Body for seventeen years.

Power he looked on as a prerogative of office, and in so doing he was following the example of Washington, John Adams, Hamilton and others, and was himself the last of that regime. The early leaders of this country were all men who believed in being themselves, and who refused to cater to the people who elected them. Electors they desired, but once those electors had done their work of electing, their place was to resign the work of government into the hands of those officials whom they themselves had chosen. The older Adams was the first to suffer violent persecution for such views.

"Can anyone read Mr. Adams' 'Defense of the American Constitution', without seeing that he was a monarchist? And John Quincy Adams, the son, was more explicit than father in his answer to Paine's 'Rights of Man'." 37 wrote Thomas Jefferson in 1825, evidently still disgruntled at having been worsted by the youthful John Quincy in the debate on Paine's pamphlet, more than a quarter of a century earlier.

The third theory of Voltaire then, that the ruler should be a ruler indeed, held in such democratic contempt by Jefferson, exerted a marked influence over the life of John Quincy Adams. That it was no more than an influence, and was modified by his interpretation of Voltaire's fourth, and only sound doctrine, that human progress is the result of applied science, was due to his own direct action.

He left St. Petersburg in 1782, a year before Mr. Dana, for two reasons: First, the mission which was to draw up a treaty of friendship

between Russia and the new United States was marked by failure; Catherine the Great was not anxious to lose England's favor. Second, after the first negotiations, there was nothing to do but wait in the hope that Russia might act, and idleness no Adams could endure. He wrote to his father:

"This is not a very good place for learning the Latin or Greek language, as there is no academy or school here, and but very few private teachers, who demand at the rate of 90 pounds sterling a year for an hour and a half each day. Mr. Dana don't chuse to employ any at that extravagant price without your positive orders, but I hope I shall be able to go on alone." 38

In reply to an expression of surprise from his father, he wrote:

"There is nobody here but princes and slaves, the slaves cannot have their children instructed, and the nobility that chuse to have theirs send them into foreign countries. There is not one school to be found in the whole city." 39

It was easy for him then, since his services to Mr. Dana were accomplished, to obtain his father's permission to return to Holland, though it was he himself who decided the route of his journey, through Sweden and Denmark in order that he might make some unofficial inquiries as to the prospect of commercial relations between those two countries and his own. 40 It is difficult to think of him as a lad of fifteen when one reads the following:

(The Swedes) "are in general good friends to America, but seem to be a little afraid for their mines; however, they are very well disposed for carrying on commerce with America, and there is a merchant here named Cederstrom who has a brother lately settled in Boston.

Mr. Eberstein, the first merchant in Noerköping, only waits for an opportunity to send some ships. Mr. Brandenburg in Stockholm, intends to send a vessel to some part of America this spring. He desired me to let him know that would be the best articles he could send, and gave me a list of the exports of Sweden, a copy of which I have sent to Mr. Dana, desiring him to answer Mr. Brandenburg as I was not certain myself about the matter."

He had left the Russian capital on October 30, 1782, and he did not reach the Hague until April 21, 1783. Immediately he took up again his studies of Latin and Greek. But these were destined to be interrupted the following September when he went to Paris to join his father, charged, with Benjamin Franklin, John Jay and Thomas Jefferson, to negotiate a definitive treaty of peace with Great Britain. The younger Adams, in the capacity of secretary, was present at all of the Conferences which lasted until the ratification of the treaty, January 14, 1784.

John Adams, utterly weary of negotiations, longed to return home, but instead was obliged to leave for London in order to negotiate a commercial treaty with Great Britain. John Quincy accompanied him, and the two took up their residence in London where Mrs. Adams and the younger children joined them in the summer of 1784.

After years of separation the family was united, and yet in spite of his passionate devotion to his mother, the eldest son longed to return to America. He wrote in his diary:

"April 14, 1784 ... yet (in spite of the intense joy he felt in seeing his mother again) the desire of returning to America..."

41. Ibid., I, 69.
42. Ibid., I, 68.
44. Ibid., I, 41.
still possesses me. My country has over me an attractive power which I do not understand. Indeed, I believe that all men have an attachment to their country distinct from all other attachments. It is imputed to our fondness for our friends and relations; yet I am apt to think I should still desire to go home were all my friends and relations here.¹⁵

That love of country was a part of his inheritance. The mother of whom he wrote more than fifty years later,

"August 1, 1843, Oh, my mother! Is there anything on earth so affecting to me as thy name? So precious to me as thy instructions to my childhood, so dear as the memory of thy life?"¹⁶

had implanted it in his heart by her own intense and unselfish patriotism.¹⁷

Now, though she longed to keep him with her, she approved the wisdom of his plan to return to America.¹⁸

At the moment, two alternatives lay before him. He might remain in England as Secretary to his father who, while he was negotiating the treaty of commerce, had been appointed Minister Plenipotentiary to the British Court. The prospect would have been pleasing to many a young man, and must have held its attractions for young Adams. Or he might definitely finish his education. There is some account of his struggle in his diary.

"April 26, 1785. Were I now to go with him (they were in Paris), probably my immediate satisfaction might be greater than it will be in returning to America. After having been travelling for these seven years almost all over Europe, and having been in the world, and among company, for three; to return to spend one or two years in the Pale of a College, subjected to all the rules which I have so long been freed from; then to plunge into the dry and

¹⁵ Memoirs and Diary of John Quincy Adams, C.F. Adams, I, 93.
¹⁶ Ibid., XI, 555
¹⁷ The Writings of John Q. Adams.
tedious study of the Law for three years; and afterwards not expect (however good an opinion I may have of myself) to bring myself into notice under three or four years more; if ever! It is really a prospect somewhat discouraging for a youth of my ambition (for I still have ambition though I hope its object is laudable). But still,

'Oh, how wretched
Is that poor man that hands on Prince's favors!'

or on those of anybody else."49

But why did he not attend Oxford? One reason, doubtless, lay in that "attractive power" which his country exerted over him. Another came from his desire to attend the college in which his father had been educated.50 But the strongest both for himself and his parents lay in his fear that he was becoming too European, too monarchistic.51

"At the age of eighteen at his own request, made from a fear that by remaining longer in Europe he might imbibe monarchical sentiments, his father permitted him to return to Massachusetts."52

He himself wrote as an old man:

"It is most surprising to me now that I escaped from the fascination of Europe's attractions. My return home from Auteuil, leaving my father when he was going upon his mission to England, decided the fate and fortunes of my after life. It was my own choice and the most judicious choice I ever made."53

Never, from the moment he made his decision, did he repent of it, though he received a disappointment at the outset. Intending to enter

50. Ibid., I, 183.
51. Ibid., I, 184.
Harvard in the Junior Sophister class, he learned that an acquaintance with certain authors whose writings he had not studied was essential, although he was otherwise as well prepared for admission as others of that class. Nevertheless the rules of the College must be obeyed and in September, 1785, he went to live for a time in the house of his uncle, William Shaw, at Haverhill, there to fulfill the college entrance requirements. In six months he had gone through studies for which the College usually allowed two years and nine months, and passed the examining board with such credit that he was allowed to reside in the College, an unusual favor.\textsuperscript{54}

During the two years he spent at Harvard he concentrated his attention on study.

"As for public affairs, I have a great aversion even to thinking of them,"\textsuperscript{55} he wrote to his mother. Yet he could not ignore them, since, as he says, the riots, insurrections and anarchy in Massachusetts were the only subject of conversation,\textsuperscript{56} and his comment on that situation forms a fitting conclusion to this chapter:

"The insurrections are not immediately dangerous but our government has not sufficient vigor and energy to suppress them at once. There has appeared in the councils a degree of timidity and irresolution which does no honor to the Executive power of a Commonwealth.... The opinion that a pure democracy appears to much greater advantage in speculation than when reduced to practice gains ground, and bids fair for popularity. I feared that by having received so large a share of my education in Europe, my attachment to a Republic government would not be sufficient for pleasing my countrymen; but I find on the contrary that I

\textsuperscript{54} The Writings of John Q. Adams, W.C. Ford, I, 111.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., I, 28.
am the best Republican here, and with my classmates, if I ever have any disputes on the subject, I am always obliged to defend that side of the question."

CHAPTER II

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS - FEDERALIST

John Quincy Adams had been admitted to practice in Essex County, Massachusetts, July 15, 1790, and on August 9 of the same year had re-opened the office in Boston where his father had practiced in his day.  But clients were not numerous and young Adams spent his first years as a barrister studying the politics of the world he had roamed since childhood. Charles Francis Adams calls the period from 1790 to 1808 the most critical in his father's life.  John Quincy Adams himself so considered it, and, looking at his career through the perspective of years, the student is inclined not only to agree with the opinion, but to deduce that its importance lay in the attitude of John Quincy Adams toward the presidency.

His attitude was one of staunch support. It was so unbiased by party prejudice, so fearless of public opinion, so free from merely personal affection or antipathy, that its very strength bred the opposition which was to follow him through life. It was best shown in two circumstances and best defined in the columns of The Columbian Centinel, a Boston newspaper, where under the pen name "Publicola," he replied to Paine's Rights of Man.  

2. Ibid., I, 16.  
References to the Publicola Papers can more fittingly be made in a later chapter; in the following two chapters John Quincy Adams, the supporter of George Washington, the Federalist, and of Thomas Jefferson, the Republican, will be shown.

To appreciate the value of that support it is necessary to picture vividly the difficulties of that time. George Washington took up the duties of the presidency with unassumed reluctance. He wrote to Henry Knox:

"... in confidence I tell you that my movements to the chair of government will be accompanied by feelings not unlike those of a culprit who is going to the place of execution." 5

No one knew better than he that "the Confederation had been a body without a soul," 6 nor did anyone foresee more clearly the cost at which the new Constitutional government was to become a living thing. The Confederation had made laws, but could not execute them, and so had been looked upon with contempt, a contempt that John Quincy Adams recognized was greater even at home than abroad. 7 The new system provided an Executive, and Washington was well aware that the responsibility of giving dignity, vigor, and pre-eminence to the new government lay largely with him.

To transform colonists and provincials into loyal citizens of the United States needed not only a new government, but also a definite body of opinion which should sustain and perfect it. A vast amount of dispute had occurred over the Constitution; Rhode Island and North Carolina still

withheld their approval; even the most hopeful admitted it was but an "Experiment." Washington knew that the Experiment must be madeworth believing in, and therefore its action must be mixed of firmness, prudence, and conciliation. "Influence is no government" he said, commenting on the failure of the Confederation; yet if he intended to supply his share of the government the country needed, he knew too, he must have the confidence of his people. The body of public opinion must be favorable, must be constructive. In no small measure John Quincy Adams was to contribute to that body of opinion.

The problems before Washington were many. All that the old Confederation could not do, would have been work enough, but there was also the organization of the new government with all that it entailed; a revenue law to be devised, a revolutionary debt to be funded, commerce to be adjusted, relations with foreign states to be defined in treaties. All these were tasks foreseen; that which was, according to his own testimony, to cause him the greatest trouble, could not have been guessed. Nor could he guess that his "deliverer" was to be a young and nearly briefless lawyer, the eldest son of his vice-president.

Something of the irony of history can be seen in the date on which George Washington was inaugurated as President. The year 1789 marked the beginning of the French Revolution as well as the beginning of a new American government. Among the repercussions of that conflict was the accentuation of the party spirit which Washington was laboring to shut out from the Union just commencing its "Experiment." By 1793 the farmers and ordinary townsfolk throughout the thirteen states were generally enthusiastic in behalf of France. After the defeat of the Duke of Brunswick in the same year, enthusiasm became little less than madness.

"Both men and women seemed for the time to have put away their wits .... Their dress, their speech, their daily conduct were all regulated on strict Republican principles. There must be a flaming liberty-cap in every house. There must be a cockade on every hat. There must be no more use of the old titles, Sir and Mr., Dr. and Rev. ... 'Let us use the social and soul-warming term Citizen.' ... At Boston every man was soon calling his neighbor Citizen and his wife Citess." 15

There were "Civic feasts" at which the "piece de resistance" was usually a huge ox barbecued and served free of cost to suit the Republican appetite, whetted by the information that the beast was Aristocracy. That the school children might be impressed with a lively recollection of the celebrations, each Young Patriot was given a civic cake stamped with the words "Liberty and Equality." 17 To the trading class everywhere, this folly, diverting though it might be, was becoming more and more serious.

They were closely dependent upon England, and who could tell when some rash

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country? Washington himself feared it.

The problems before him were nettling. The United States by a treaty of alliance had guaranteed forever the French possessions in America; by a treaty of commerce, the freedom of the ports of the country for both privateers and prizes of France, a shelter denied to her enemies. But, were the treaties made with the kingdom of France binding now that she had become a Republic? Did the treaty of alliance apply to an offensive War? Here was a dilemma. No one in Europe doubted that America would cast in her lot with France if only in order to requite her inestimable service scarce a dozen years past. No one in America doubted it either who gave free rein to sympathy and thought of nothing but the glory of Liberty and Equality. Added to this precarious patriotism was considerable private cupidity, which openly advocated privateering upon the commerce of Great Britain, and for which commissions were issued under the authority of France. To counteract the apparent tendency of these popular passions, John Quincy Adams published in The Columbian Centinel a series of essays, signed Marcellus, and destined to have a definite influence on the governmental policy.

Washington was not ignorant of the consequences that war would bring to the young American Republic. All the posts on the northwestern frontiers were held by English troops; the lower sources of the Mississippi were commanded by Spain. To become an ally of France would be to renew all the peril of our own struggle for independence. But his Cabinet was almost as

18. Ibid., II, 96-97.
as divided in opinion as was the country. He was, he wrote to Henry Lee, Governor of Virginia, "pestered" by their differences of opinion, and we can surmise with what satisfaction he followed the essays of Marcellus.

They stirred the thirteen states with their vigor for they and their successors, the Columbus and Barnevelt papers, were widely copied and called out many replies. The most able spokesman for the opposition was James Sullivan, then Attorney General, and later Governor of Massachusetts, who published his letters under the name Americanus in The Boston Chronicle. Eventually he owned himself defeated, and so impressed was he with Adams' ability that he engaged him as coadjutor in important cases.

The Marcellus papers were three in number. The first, published April 24, 1793, exposed the injustice of privateering. Interference with British trade was a direct violation of the 7th Article of the Treaty of Peace with Great Britain. Then, lest the offenders should offer the excuse of England's delinquencies in such matters, a practical reason for repentance was added: In the interest of commerce privateering was a bad business. It would only call for retaliation, and in such case, we would have no redress. The essay ended with an appeal to the national pride and as fine a bit of irony as can be imagined. In their contract of commerce, the United States and Prussia had condemned the practice of privateering in war, an attitude of which the United States might well be proud for it was

25. Ibid., I, 28.
the first instance in history in which two nations had done such a thing. The French were so impressed by it that their National Assembly adopted the same attitude when they declared war on Germany. Succeeding Assemblies had abandoned this high standard, but what was to become of the two young Republics if now they so lowered their ideals? 26

The second of the papers was more insistent. The United States could take no other course than that of neutrality. To preserve peace is the duty of every country, and Adams called on the French themselves to prove his argument:

"'Liberty', says the new Declaration of Rights, 'consists in the power of doing whatever is not contrary to the rights of others.' 'Whatever you would that men should do to you, do you even so to them.' Let us, therefore, be cautious to do nothing contrary to the rights of others. The natural state of all nations is a state of peace. It is what we have a right to expect from them and for the same reason it is our duty to observe it towards them." 27

Neutrality became doubly our duty in view of our treaties with England and Germany, and even if it were not our duty, self preservation is the first law of a country. We had a sea-coast of twelve hundred miles and no navy to protect it; we had no war supplies, and were "destitute of even the defensive apparatus of war," and, what must have been a poser to the pro-French who were also the anti-Hamilton party, 28 war would lead to general bankruptcy in the nation. 29

The third paper had a clinching force. One by one, the various

27. Ibid., I, 135.
29. Writings of John Q. Adams, W.C. Ford, I, 140-143.
French governments had absolved their nation from all treaties that might be injurious. Where then was our security? Where, our responsibility? Even the French colonies had asked protection from Great Britain. We found it difficult to protect ourselves from the Indians; we might find it somewhat difficult to fight all Europe. "As citizens of a nation at a vast distance from Europe, of a nation whose happiness consists in a real independence from all European politics, it is our duty to remain the peaceable and silent though sorrowful spectators of the sanguinary scene." 30

Meanwhile, Washington was reading the Marcellus papers with "expressions of the highest satisfaction," and conferring with his Cabinet whose differences of opinion seem to have subsided. The Vice-President could write,

"The President, however, with the unanimous concurrence of the four officers of state has formed the same judgment with Marcellus." 31

This, however, was not reflective of the judgment of the country. William H. Seward wrote some years later:

"The position of John Quincy Adams on neutrality was new, and in opposition to the opinions of the great mass of the country. To him, it is believed, belongs the honor of first publicly advocating this line of policy. In these articles he developed the political creed which governed him through life in regard to union at home and independence of all foreign alliances or entanglements - independence not only politically but in manufactures and commerce." 32

In spite of the unfavorable public opinion Washington issued a def-
inite proclamation of neutrality on April 22, 1793. Immediately the French party took this for British partisanship. The proclamation was denounced in the papers of the recently-founded Republican party, and Citizen Edmond Genet, newly arrived as Minister from the French Republic, found himself the hero he had always believed he was born to be.

His conduct from the day he had landed at Charleston had been amazing. Before he presented his credentials, before he had been recognized by the President, before he had even received a formal transfer of the papers and books of the minister he had come to succeed, he had commanded each French Consul to act as a Court of Admiralty for the trial and condemnation of prizes captured by French cruisers; he had commissioned privateers and enlisted men to prey upon English commerce; he had even gone so far as to raise troops for operation against Spain.

If this conduct was amazing, the conduct of Americans was more so. Men who could not give Washington any mark of public respect so much did they detest the slightest remnants of monarchy, now came forward by the hundreds to welcome Genet on his triumphal journey from Charleston to Philadelphia. "Civic feasts" multiplied; bombastic addresses and compliments were showered on him, while his own speeches in return rang out in a tone of authority and patronage.

On Saturday, May 18, 1793, Washington recognized him as the Minister from the French Republic, but the cold greeting that accompanied the recognition brought this youth of twenty-seven to the sudden realization that the Government of the United States was a stern reality.
The minister's first request was for money. Something over two million dollars of that borrowed from France remained unpaid, and though payment was not due for some time, France was hard pressed for money and hoped for immediate reimbursement. Hamilton's 'no' was emphatic. The treasury was empty, and had it been full, the request could not be granted. So unusual a proceeding at such a time would justify Great Britain in construing it as a violation of the neutrality lately proclaimed.37

Then the storm broke. Genet flew into a passion in which he remained until, rebuked and recalled by the French government for purposes of guillotining, he was saved by Washington who gallantly refused to have him extradited.38 But before that conclusion, he was to shower abuse on the President and stir up rebellion in the country such as can scarcely be imagined.

A large portion of the Press sympathized with France and attacked the government for its lack of sympathy. Particularly Philip Freneau's National Gazette lashed Washington until he doubted whether free government and free speech could co-exist. He wrote on one occasion,

"The publications in Freneau's and Bache's papers are outrages on common decency. But I have a consolation within ... that is, that neither ambition nor interested motives have influenced my conduct. The arrows of malevolence, therefore, can never reach the most vulnerable part of me, though while I am up as a mark they will be continually aimed."39

37. McMaster, History of the People of the United States, II, 103.
38. W. Wilson, George Washington, 300.
Genet's hue and cry was that Washington was pro-English, a traitor to the France who had aided him when he was Commander-in-Chief of the Colonial Army, a traitor even to the country whose President he was. Genet asserted he had good letters to prove that the Executive of the United States was under the influence of British gold and that the officers had formed a plan to subject America to Great Britain.\footnote{40}

On September 19, 1793, he wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Paris,

"This friend of Lafayette calls me anarchist, Jacobin, and threatens to have me recalled because I have not delivered myself to the Federalist party who wish to do nothing for us, and whose only aim is to establish here a monarchy."\footnote{41}

Washington might well have called Genet, Jacobin, since through devotion to him, scores of Jacobin Clubs had been formed by Republicans throughout the country.\footnote{42} He might well have called him anarchist for he had not only flagrantly broken treaties, as well as the laws of the land, but had had the audacity when privately reproved by Washington to appeal to the people to be his judges. Washington felt the disloyalty of his people keenly, all the more keenly because he surmised, although he did not know positively, that his own Secretary of State was their leader.\footnote{43} He wrote to Thomas Jefferson, July 11, 1793,

"Is the minister of the French Republic to set the acts of this government at defiance with impunity? And then threaten the executive with an appeal to the people? What must the world think of such conduct and of the government of the United States for submitting to it?\footnote{44}

\footnote{40. Letter to Henry Lee, July 21, 1793, \textit{Writings of G. Washington}, ed. by W.C. Ford, XII, 311.}
\footnote{41. Ibid., 323}
In the same month he wrote also to his friend, the Governor of Virginia,

"That there are in this, as well as in all other countries, discontented characters I well know, as also that these characters are actuated by very different views; some good, from the opinion that the general government is impure; some bad, and, if I might be allowed to use so harsh an expression, diabolical, inasmuch as they are not only meant to impede the measures of that government generally, but more especially, (as a great means towards the accomplishment of it) to destroy the confidence which is necessary for the people to place, (until they have unequivocal proof of demerit) in their public servants."

But John Quincy Adams was not to let the President be defied with impunity. The Columbus essays published in the Columbian Centinel during November, 1793, denounced Genet as a dangerous enemy and his appeal as "an insolent outrage to the man who was deservedly the object of the grateful affection of the whole people of America." 46

The young lawyer's talent and knowledge of diplomatic relations were better displayed in the Columbus papers than in those signed by Marcellus. In the former, Adams assumes the attitude that he is the spokesman of the nation - which he was far from being. But the very assumption that the American people as a body were indignant at the insolence of Genet, especially at his disrespect towards their President, went far to make them indignant, and the tact with which Adams went in their door to come out his own is admirable.

42. Letter of Ames to Dwight, Fisher Ames, Works from His Speeches and Correspondence, 2 vols. Boston, 1854, I, 150.
43. McMaster, History of the People of the United States, II, 113-115.
44. The Writings of Washington, ed. by W.C. Ford, XII, 302.
"Because the rulers of free men," he commences, "being only the depositaries of their power are accountable to them for the execution of their trust, unquestionably the right of every citizen is free speech." ⁴⁷

This must have been exhilarating to The Boston Chronicle, The American Daily Advertiser, The National Gazette and their patrons. To continue the essay only to find irrefutable proof that "This privilege ought not... to be extended to foreign ministers" ⁴⁸ may have been a bit surprising.

The attitude of John Quincy Adams toward the first president of the United States as well as the attitude that he thought all Americans should hold, may well be inferred from the following quotation:

"A beardless foreigner whose name was scarcely enrolled upon the catalogue of Liberty; a petulant stripling whose commission from a friendly power was his only title to respect ... presumed to place himself in opposition to the Father of his country and to call for their approbation to support his claims; they viewed the application as an indignity to themselves, and even before their judgment deliberated on the merits of the case, rejected the arrogant pretensions of the foreigner with pointed indignation." ⁴⁹

The following papers proved to these upholders of the Administration how wise they had been thus to "follow the dictates of their hearts," for they learned "that the voice of reason and justice was in exact unison with that of their affections." They had delegated to Congress the power to

⁴⁸. Ibid., 151.
⁴⁹. Ibid., 152.
regulate commercial intercourse with foreign nations, and to the President the power of negotiating with foreign ministers. If a difference of opinion occurred, they had not kept the right of judging. How wise they had been therefore not to judge! 50

They had seen that Genet’s efforts in appealing to them from the president had been to raise an insurrection, for that is the only method by which a people can reverse the decisions of their government. They had resented his maxim, "to divide inorder to govern," always a favorite maxim of political villany. They might compare themselves to the Athenians who were distinguished for the freedom of their government, the mildness of their laws, and the sagaciousness of their understanding, but who made punishable by death the bare appearance of a stranger in their political assemblies. Being so wise, what could they do but support "the most illustrious character at the head of the union"? 51

The Columbus Papers turned the tide of sentiment against Genet. A statement from John Adams may be discounted somewhat because of the natural affection he had for his son, but must also be credited with the fact that it comes from the man who was Washington’s Vice-President, and who was scrupulously honest;

"Washington was indeed under obligations to him for turning the tide of sentiment against Genet, and he was sensible of it and grateful for it. The enthusiasm for Genet and France and the French Revolution was at this time almost universal throughout the United States, but in Pennsylvania, especially in Philadelphia, the rage was irresistible .... John Quincy Adams’ writings first turned this tide; and the yellow fever completed the salvation of Washington.

51. Ibid., 157-161
Not all the Washington ministers, Hamilton and Pickering included, could have written those papers which were so fatal to Genet. Washington saw it and felt his obligations." 52

Others besides Washington saw it, and saw it with unfriendly eyes. Years later John Quincy Adams wrote of this episode:

"For my defence of Washington's Administration against Genet's French Democracy I received the honor of having my name placarded upon the main mast of a French frigate in Boston harbour as one of the Aristocrats of Boston. My sentiments then happened to fall in with those of the Federalists and I was accordingly numbered with them." 53

He might have gone on to show how the name Aristocrat followed him through the years. He who had left European courts for fear of becoming monarchial, 54 and who had always considered the decision the most judicious he had ever made; 55 he who had dared to champion the policies of George Washington, the American, against those of Edmond Genet, the Frenchman; he who was the first advocate of American isolation, was to be branded again during his own presidential campaign as an "Aristocrat," as a would-be European nobleman, as an enemy of American development, and all because of the remembrance of his attitude toward the Presidency during Washington's Administration.

55. Ibid., XII, 78.
CHAPTER III

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS - REPUBLICAN

The World War of the eighteenth century became the World War of the nineteenth, and still the United States remained a non-belligerent. The Neutrality Law of 1793, Jay's Treaty of 1795, the alarms of John Adams' administration all had strengthened the young republic in spite of the criticism of the Republican party. Their turn had now come to shoulder the difficulties of neutrality. France had set all Europe afire, and America, distant though she was, could not remain unscorched. Once again it is necessary to give briefly the historical background of the period in order that the attitude of John Quincy Adams towards the first Republican president may stand out in clearer relief. Removed from public office by one of Jefferson's first acts as President, this son of Jefferson's greatest rival, was to be Jefferson's staunchest supporter in the crisis of his administration.

All the world being at war, cargoes could make their way into European ports only under the American flag. The carrying trade of the world fell to American shippers who, as neutrals, were free to go where they pleased. They fetched cargoes of every description from the four quarters of the globe and reshipped them from American ports as neutral goods in neutral bottoms. The business was highly lucrative. But in November 1806, 1. McMaster, History of the People of the United States, III, 288.
Napoleon issued the Berlin decree declaring a complete blockade against everything British, and in January 1807, England issued two Orders in Council forbidding neutrals to trade with any port in Europe or the Indies. The Milan decree of December 1807, completed the distress of American commerce. Any ship bound for Europe, except for Sweden, Russia, or the Turkish possessions was liable to capture by one side or the other. Our merchant marine was threatened with destruction and loud complaints reached the administration by every ship from abroad. 2

Jefferson's defensive measures were pacific. Retaliation consisted in passing the nonimportation act of 1806, and in sending William Pinkney to the Court of St. James to aid Ambassador Monroe, in negotiations which would rectify our wrongs. The concessions they received were scarcely worthy of the name. The treaty they signed did not give up impressment; insisted that West India products pay a duty of two per-cent before they be exported to Europe as American goods; that European products pay a duty of one per-cent in American ports before they be exported to the Indies; and none of this was to be operative unless we bound ourselves not to abide by Napoleon's Berlin Decree. Thus it seemed that England dictated our taxes and was determined on driving us into war with France. Jefferson did not dare to submit the treaty to the Senate, and concealed its terms to protect Monroe. 3 Unalterably opposed to war, he devised the Embargo. On December 18, 1807, Congress received a message which begged the representatives:

"... to perceive all the advantages which may be expected from an inhibition of the departure of our vessels from the ports of

3. Ibid., II, 310.
the United States ... and the necessity of making every preparation for whatever events may grow out of the present crisis. 

Immediately a Senate committee was appointed and bidden to report on the Embargo the same day.

Why John Quincy Adams was named a member of that committee forms matter for interesting speculation. He had been elected as a Federalist representative. He was a New Engander, and the opinions of New Englanders concerning the topic of the day might be summed up by those of "A Yankee Farmer":

"What did the Chesapeake incident, what did impressment of Americans, what did anything and everything amount to, compared to the one tremendous fact of Great Britain's struggle with France? All thoughtful men knew that Great Britain alone stood between us and that slavery which would be our portion if France should prevail."

Finally, he was the son of that Federalist of Federalists, John Adams, and the defender of his father against the virulent attacks of Thomas Jefferson during Washington's administration. These things considered, Jefferson might expect little support from John Quincy Adams.

But these were not the only things to be considered; John Quincy Adams was already known as a man impervious to personal interest. For what might be Federal doctrine or Republican doctrine he cared nothing. For what might be Sectional interest he cared less when it interfered with the good of the country. Some historians have pictured him as flinty of disposition as the

5. John Lowell, (A Yankee Farmer, pseud.) Peace without Dishonour - War
New England soil, not one can show that Adams was ever vindictive. To have his support in the Embargo issue would be most advantageous; to be without it might well be disastrous. Always and under all circumstances his vote was determined by his own independent judgment. If he could be made to believe in the advantages of the Embargo, he would lend his support to it, even as he had supported the purchase of Louisiana. He had become a man without a party and that there was loneliness in the situation may be read between the lines of the following letter to his father:

"My situation here at this moment is singular and critical. My views of the present policy and my sense of the course enjoined upon me by public duty are so different from those of the Federalists that I find myself in constant opposition to them. Yet I have no communication with the Administration .... The friends of the Executive in the Senate repose little confidence in me ... This temper does appear in some small degree to be wearing off ... Yet since the commencement of the present session I have been placed upon every committee of national importance .... I find myself charged with the duty of originating and conducting measures of the highest interest."  

He was, then, placed upon the Embargo committee to consult on the measure which all but proved the doom of Jefferson.

During the presidential campaign of 1824, in order to defend Adams from the attacks of Timothy Pickering who had been his senatorial companion from Massachusetts, Stephen R. Bradly wrote an account of the Embargo proceedings. Mr. Bradly had been a member of this same committee who, it would seem, were, with the exception of General Samuel Smith, considerably in doubt as to the propriety of the measure. Of the six members, John Quincy

5. (continued) without Hope, Boston, 1812, 39-40.  
7. Seward, Life of John Quincy Adams, 86.
Adams was the most difficult to convince. But, when General Smith stated the reasons which prompted Jefferson to this policy, the members agreed to it unanimously. They agreed likewise to request a suspension of the congressional rules in order that the bill might have its second reading on the same day, and that for a very justifiable reason. If the Bill of Embargo were to be eight or ten days in passing the two houses, a number of merchants would in the meantime send out vessels loaded with provisions for ten or twelve months and defeat the object of the Bill. Their profits would likewise make others hostile to the Embargo. Mr. Bradly concluded:

"It is injurious that Mr. Pickering should attach so much wrong to Mr. Adams, as I am confident that some other members of the committee pressed the passing of the act in the manner related, in as strong terms as Mr. Adams. He might as well have censured the whole Senate except Mr. Pickering, Mr. Crawford and four or five others who opposed the bill . . . . I further well recollect that as we passed from the committee room to the Senate, Mr. Adams observed to me: 'This measure will cost you and me our seats, but private interest must not be put in opposition to public good.'"9

The vote was 22 to 6. There were but four Federalists in the Senate, Adams and Bradly, Crawford and Pickering. Crawford was a new member and afterwards supported the bill entirely.

10. Annals of Congress, 10 Cong., 1 Sess., 60.
Consternation was general. New England could hardly believe what had come to pass. Her interests, outside of agriculture, were exclusively commercial and that her commerce should be paralyzed by a blow from her own government made her feel politically outlawed. James Sullivan, now Governor of Massachusetts, wrote to his former coadjutor to request an explanation of these secret proceedings of Congress, which had resulted in the Embargo. Adams' answer was prompt and clear.

He had advocated the Embargo; first because it had been explicitly recommended by the President in a message. That this reason should be put first, or, indeed, put down at all, is significant of the attitude that John Quincy Adams consistently held toward the president whoever he might be. Adams had confidence in the people that they would vote for a president of some ability. Then, once the presidential choice was made, he gave the Executive that confidence which Washington had said "was necessary for the people to place (unless they have unequivocal proof of demerit) in their public servants." Adams' letter to Governor Sullivan commenced and ended in this disposition. He concludes:

"Yet it was a measure so necessarily distressing to ourselves, that I should have hesitated upon it, but for the decisive recommendation of the President." 15

This should not suggest, however, that he was anything of a courtier. Even his enemies, though they called him contemptuously by every other imperialistic title, could never call him that. He was democratic to the very core; he was patriotic to the core, and being both, he thought it logical to allow the chosen representative of the nation the power to use the authority lodged in him and to give from time to time a "decisive recommendation."

If he implied extraordinary powers from the Constitution, he must give his reasons. And then, if still the matter hung in the balance, it was the President's opinion, and not John Quincy Adams' which tipped the scales. So it was in this matter.

He had considered Jefferson's reasons for the Embargo weighty. The advent of a new British Minister was hourly expected. Mr. Rose, the gentleman in question, was near enough to Washington to have his movements observed, and his attitude was suspicious. There were reasons for supposing that his instructions would be so arrogant that they would be inadmissible. The British Squadron hovering off our unguarded coast would have instruction to commence hostilities on the rupture of the negotiations, and prudence seemed to call for a measure which would avoid losing any ships issuing from our ports. There was also all but official intelligence that the British king had issued a retaliating proclamation to counteract that of France. Moreover, it was probable that the Embargo by throwing out of employment the British sailors in this country would induce them of their own accord to return to British ships. This appeared to Adams as a "very desirable circumstance" for he believed it would take away any pretext the

British had to offer for engaging in a quarrel. Finally, the Embargo was an experiment to see how far the government might calculate upon the support of the people for the maintenance of their own rights. It was important to the country to commence this experiment and observe its effects before the negotiations with Mr. Rose should commence.

It is important to note here that Adams deemed the Embargo only a temporary affair.

"It was, however, in my mind, a measure merely precautionary and which I had and have no idea will be of long continuance. General embargoes of 6 or 12 months, of which some gentlemen talk so lightly, never entered my brain as practicable in a great commercial country. I question whether an example of the kind can be found in history." 19

The people, however, had an idea concerning their own rights somewhat at variance with Jefferson's. Opposition to the Embargo swept down the coast, and the Force Acts of January, March, and April 1808 were passed. By them the Embargo was spread over every lake, bay and river in the country. Henceforth anything termed a boat, from market-boats carrying vegetables over the river between New Jersey and New York to small boys' sailboats on inland lakes, must be furnished, if the Collector demanded, with a Clearance. 20 Here was an excess of National power such as the strictest Federalist had never dreamed of. The effect was immediately disastrous. American ocean-carrying trade was ruined. New Haven's commerce never recovered; the Embargo and the war which followed transformed the place from a commercial into a manufacturing city. In fact, the whole...
United States was to be suddenly transformed from a purely agricultural into a largely manufacturing country, a great development, though it was taken under an artificial stimulus.

It seems to be held by a number of historians, John S. Bassett, Albert J. Beveridge, and Woodrow Wilson, for instance, that because England remained firm, the Embargo did not affect her. On the contrary, according to Carl Russell Fish, it caused the British Empire much suffering. Newfoundland was on the point of starvation, and English mills shut down with all the attendant woes.

Possibly then, to have persevered in the Embargo might have brought the capitulation Jefferson desired, but at the time there were few who thought so. John Quincy Adams had early ceased to give the measure his personal approval, although he still upheld the administration. As early as January 11, 1808, he had moved in the Senate,

"That a committee be appointed ... to inquire at what period the present embargo can ... be removed ...."

But the measure was defeated by a vote of 10-17. Petitions poured in from all sides. He answered them all in the following tone:

22. Ibid., VII, 278.
28. Ibid., III, 187.
"...I believe the Administration for their own sakes ought to give it up. But so long as the Executive, the responsible department, believes that this measure will help and not hinder them in negotiation, I think its repeal ought not to be pressed by its opponents in Congress ...."29

It may well be that something of the Adams' obstinancy was creeping into his support of the Embargo. He abominated public uprisings, and the people's attitude in this instance may have served as the proverbial red flag. One of the countless bad squibs written on the Embargo ran:

"Embargo read backward, O-grab-me appears,
A scary sound ever for big children's ears.
The syllables transformed, Go, bar'em comes next,
A mandate to keep ye from harm says my text.
Analyze Miss Embargo, her letters, I'll wage,
If not removed shortly will make this: mob-rage."30

By December, 1808, the mob-rage had assumed ominous proportions.

When on January 9, 1809, the Force Act was passed, which among other measures, authorized collectors of customs to seize any vessel or wagon if they suspected the owner of an intention to evade the Embargo laws; offered rich rewards for "informers;" and authorized the use of the militia, the army, and the navy to enforce obedience,31 popular wrath swept along the New England coasts like a forest fire. The Collector of Boston refused to obey the law and resigned.32 The Legislature of Massachusetts passed a bill denouncing the "Force Act" as unconstitutional and declaring any officer entering a house in execution of it to be guilty of a high misdemeanor, punishable by fine and imprisonment.33

The Governor of Connecticut flatly declined the request of Secretary of War Dearborn to afford military aid, and then proceeded to address the Legislature in a speech bristling with sedition.34

John Quincy Adams highly disapproved of Jefferson's measures.35

He had disapproved also of the attitude of the American people and had expressed his views in a letter to Nahum Parker on December 5, 1808.

"The greatest of all dangers to the Administration and its friends is that of internal dissension .... Whatever difference of opinion theremay be on the system to be adopted, when once resolved upon by the concurrence of the majority there must be no hesitation or wavering to carry it into effect .... The want of this hearty cooperation among its friends has already weakened the government infinitely more than the inveteracy of its open opponents."36

Just as more than twenty years later he was to come to the aid of another enemy, President Jackson, in his difficulty over the French Spoliation Claims, and was to score the American people for not presenting an undivided front to European onlookers,37 so now, he was to bend every effort to induce Jefferson to repeal the Embargo lest the Union should suffer. Secession was the logical step after nullification, and indeed had been openly advocated.38

32. McMaster, History of the People of the United States, III, 329.
33. Ibid., III, 329-330.
34. Ibid., III, 331-332.
Pickering's treacherous communications with the English Ambassador, George Rose, had endeavored to pledge us to a sort of un-official alliance with England. He had assured Rose that even if his mission did end in failure, the true policy for England was still "to let us alone; to bear patiently the wrongs we did ourselves; to maintain a dignified composure, and to abstain from war." 39

Rose naturally wrote of the affair to George Canning who was at the same time hearing of New England affairs from another unexpected source. A Canadian, John Henry by name, whose business interests at Boston were nearly ruined by the Embargo, had returned to that city to examine the situation. He was soon deep in the secrets of the Federalists, and from the accounts he gave to Sir James Craig, the Governor-General of Canada, it appears that Pickering had correctly represented their views. Men of property and influence he wrote, are sure that a few months more of suffering, of privation of all the benefits of commerce, will make the people of New England ready to quit the Union and set up a government of their own. The leaders are already preparing for this event and while waiting for the people to arrive at this decision are secretly taking measures to arouse them from their lethargy. 40

This was the information which Adams wished to impart to Jefferson. But his efforts must be of necessity entirely unofficial. He was no longer a Senator. Because of his support of Jefferson's policy, Massachusetts had indignantly elected his successor some six months before a successor was needed, and Adams had immediately resigned, for to hold his seat in the

40. Ibid., III, 285-287.
Senate of the United States without exercising the most perfect freedom of
agency under the sole and exclusive control of his own sense of right was,
he said, out of the question. He was, then, in a somewhat embarrassing
situation. There had been no friendly intercourse between Jefferson and
himself all during the period of his Senatorship. He had had, however,
and was to have, much practice in conducting business with personal enemies
and accordingly he called on the President.

It is gratifying to think that Jefferson related this circumstance
and commended Adams' loyalty to his country years later when Adams was
president and stood much in need of praise. He wrote from Monticello to
William B. Giles, in December, 1825:

"Mr. J.Q. Adams called and made apologies
for it, saying that he had some very
serious communications to make .... He
spoke then of the dissatisfaction of the
Eastern portion of our confederacy
.... The repeal of the Embargo was abso-
lutely necessary. I expressed a just sense
of the merit of this information and of the
importance of the disclosure to the safety
and even the salvation of our country ....
That interview I remember well, not, indeed,
in the very words which passed between us,
but in their substance, which was of a
character too awful, too deeply engraved in
my mind, and influencing too materially the
course I had to pursue ever to be forgotten
.... (it was) too important to be forgotten,
not only from the revolution of the measures
it obliged me to adopt, but also from the
renewals of it in my memory on the frequent
occasions I have had of doing justice to
Mr. Adams, by repeating this proof of his
fidelity to his country and of his superiority
over all ordinary considerations when the
safety of that was brot into consideration."  

41. Letter of John Q. Adams to William B. Giles, November 15, 1808, W.C.
From his own words we can see that Jefferson knew how singular and significant a thing had happened. He knew that Adams had acted from love of duty and of country, not from love of him.

"Mr. Adams and myself not being then in the habit of mutual consultation and confidence, I considered it as the stronger proof of the purity of his patriotism which was able to lift him above all party passions when the safety of his country was endangered." 44

Jefferson at last felt a touch of panic and the Embargo was repealed by introducing the "Non-Intercourse" Act just three days before he gave up the office of president. 45

Adams wrote to his wife:

"The Embargo is to come off in part the 15th of this month. It is to be entirely repealed from the end of the next session of Congress. All the federal members but two voted against the bill." 46

Theoretically, then, all the federal members but two should have borne no grudge against Mr. Adams. Yet the Republican Governor of Massachusetts, James Sullivan, his old opponent, had written to President Jefferson:

"The Federal party in this State have obtained the government. Their principal object at present appears to be the political and even the personal destruction of John Quincy Adams ..." 47

44. Letter of Thomas Jefferson to . Ibid., VII, 431.
Because of his attitude toward the Administration of Thomas Jefferson, this grudge was to follow him through life. For the time being, however, he was to escape some of its malignance. On March 6, 1809, President Madison offered him the appointment of minister plenipotentiary to St. Petersburg, and though he was to leave the country with the cries of "Bargain and Corruption" in his ears, he was at least for eight years more or less "out of sight, out of mind," and, therefore, at peace.

CHAPTER IV

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS - IMPERIALIST

During the years 1817 to 1824 the attitude of John Quincy Adams towards the presidency underwent a change - not in principle but in procedure. He had continuously upheld Washington with admiration and affection. Jefferson he had upheld grimly for duty's sake and with no love lost. Monroe he was to persuade in order that he might uphold.

Times were changing when Monroe came to the presidency. Heretofore, foreign affairs had absorbed attention that was really needed for domestic problems so that the fate of administrations had come to hang upon their foreign policy. But with the return of peace all questions had become domestic questions; the strain of partisanship in violent issues was eased, and the nation entered into the "era of good feeling." Even our foreign policy was to become domesticated, and this through the agency of John Quincy Adams.

Perhaps it was just because the fate of past administrations had depended on their foreign policies that Monroe recalled Adams from the Court of St. James in order to make him his Secretary of State. Washington's prophecy:

"I shall be much mistaken, if, in as short a time as can be well expected, he is not found at the head of the diplomatic corps, be the government administrated by whomsoever the people may choose."

1. Carl Russell Fish, American Diplomacy, 1.
had come true. John Quincy Adams was acknowledged, even by Europeans, as
the best diplomat in Europe. 3 Because of his influence, the period from
1815 to 1829 may in many ways be regarded as the golden age of American
diplomacy. He was regarded as codifying our diplomatic opinions in form
to serve as a guide for the future, just as Marshall was, during those
same years, codifying the constitutional practices of the past. 4 The
greater part of that same period was his own golden age as well. His
ardent and truly national patriotism burned to give itself in public ser-
vice, and rarely enough had it been permitted to expand as he willed in
the United States he loved. During the eight years he was Secretary of
State, his unquestioned diplomatic superiority made him keener of sight and
surer of judgment than any other member of the Administration, and Monroe,
who had shown good judgment in appointing him, was to show even better
judgment in listening to him.

In no other position, perhaps, could Adams' characteristic gifts
and long special preparation have exercised a more decisive influence, or
have been put to nobler use. As Secretary of State it lay within his
province to direct the course of American foreign policy, not by a species
of constitutional right, such as is enjoyed by European ministers, but by
his ability to dominate the thinking of those who had the power. It was as
a diplomat that Adams would prevail, and it was as a diplomat that he
rendered the greatest service to his country, services for which as yet he
3. Ibid., 216.
has received all too little credit, but which a re-reading of the contemporary documents might place before his fellow citizens in a new light.

The years 1817 to 1825 may, perhaps, be called a most decisive period in the history of American foreign policy. The era of the Spanish-American War and that of the Great War might be suggested as more or equally decisive, but the problems they presented and the issues they raised for the United States were in very large measure the inevitable working out of the forces liberated under Monroe, whose name is for all time associated with what we are accustomed to consider the most distinctive of American political doctrines. But the importance of the Monroe Doctrine, however great it is, must not be allowed to overshadow other weighty events of that same period, events without which the Monroe Doctrine might never have come into being.

Adams' first official interview with his new Chief took place on the twentieth of September, 1817. Interestingly enough it introduced the subject of the advisability of recognizing the now mighty South American republics. A dramatist could scarcely have contrived his plot more artistically than thus in the first negotiation between these two builders of the Monroe Doctrine to cast the shadow of the Latin American interests over their official path. From the very beginning of his administration Monroe had the colonial question at heart. The ardor for republicanism that he had displayed in France in 1794 seems not to have cooled, and it was with intense enthusiasm that on October 25, 1817, he laid before his Cabinet the proposition he had a month before presented to Adams, that of acknowledging the independence of the revolting Spanish colonies in South

Adams did not share his feelings. Not that the Secretary was opposed to the idea of a republican South America. On the contrary, as he told the Cabinet, he was not willing to see the new governments fall, but they were not going to fall and our record must be clear from any interference with the European powers who were attempting peaceful mediation. He persuaded Monroe of the wisdom of this course and the President's message to Congress November 16, 1818, contained only a brief mention of the topic.

By March 1818, events had proved the sagacity of Adams' plan. He now showed the President and the Cabinet that since the Holy Allies had had a free opportunity to attempt a peaceful adjustment and had failed, as he had believed they would, we must be careful not to commit ourselves against recognition of the new republics, because ultimately we should recognize them. He even assured the British minister that we would co-operate with England in preserving the independence of the States though not in alliance; for he had surmised the separation of England from the Allies and sought to widen the breach.

In short, Adams who had been between two fires, had safely extinguished one, and could now devote his full attention to the other, the burning question of the acquisition of Florida. The date of our recognition of the Spanish-American Republics hung on the Florida treaty, and it seems strange

8. Richardson, Messages and Papers of the Presidents, II, 13.
9. Carl Russell Fish, American Diplomacy, 208.
that Monroe failed so signally to understand the connection between the two.

Adams' diary is filled during the five years in which the issue was made increasingly vital by the pressure of Henry Clay, in the Senate, with entries of which the following is typical:

"July 25, 1818. The President ... very abruptly asked me ... to propose ... to the British Government an immediate cooperation between the United States and Great Britain to promote the independence of South America. I asked him what part of South America, 'All South America and Mexico and the Island included.' I told him I thought Great Britain was not yet prepared for such a direct proposition; and, entering into details, I immediately found it was a crude idea, which he immediately abandoned. But I conjectured that ... the Richmond Enquirer, had put it into his head. For the Richmond Enquirer ... is the paper by which Virginia works upon the President. Its influence is much more upon him than for him, and it is excessively impatient for the acknowledgment of Buenos Ayres."10

Six months later Monroe was fully determined to acknowledge the Spanish Republics, and showed Adams a draft of a message to Congress in which he asked approval of the minister he had resolved to appoint.11 Adams replied that if the acknowledgment must be made, he hoped it would be done in as simple and unostentatious way as possible. He thought it not consistent with our national dignity that we be the first in sending a minister to a new power; it had not been done by any European power to ourselves and he believed the first minister should come from them. His diary concludes:

11. Ibid., IV, 205.
"Instead of admitting the Senate or the House to any share, I would expressly avoid it. It was, I had no doubt, by our Constitution, an act of the Executive authority. General Washington had exercised it in recognizing the French Republic by receiving Genet; Madison, by declining to receive Onis and then by receiving him. In this instance I thought the Executive ought carefully to preserve the entire authority given him by the Constitution and not weaken it by setting the precedent of making either House a party to an act which it was his executive right and duty to perform." 12

The same day the diary notes that "the draft was altered." 13

Thus the "alarums and excursions" of Monroe to South America continued during the years 1817 to 1822, and thus they were tactfully brought to nought by Adams, until the Florida treaty safely signed, he willingly acceded to the President's desire. 14

The second great strategic victory won by Adams as Secretary of State was in his successful championship of Andrew Jackson's irruption into Florida. This victory, like the other two, was gained by persuading Monroe to follow a policy to which he was opposed, but which later, when time had shown its wisdom, he graciously adopted as his own child.

Adams' stand in the Florida imbroglio was an outcome, not of his sympathy with Jackson for whom he had little, but of his attitude towards Monroe's official position. The Secretary did not believe that under the circumstances it was fitting for the Administration in the person of its Chief magistrate to censure Jackson's censurable conduct. To do so was in his eyes to demean the dignity of the President. For a proper understanding 12. Memoirs and Diary of John Q. Adams, C.F. Adams, IV, 206.
13. Ibid., IV, 207.
of Adams' position with regard to Jackson's high-handed actions in Florida a brief recall of those actions will be of use here. It will then be easier to follow Adams' reasoning and to see why he considered a repudiation of Jackson by the President as derogatory to the prestige of the United States government.

The United States had for many years cast longing eyes in the direction of Florida. As early as Jefferson's administration, unsuccessful attempts had been made to buy this territory.\(^{15}\) Shortly after Monroe's inauguration, a new government in Spain offered to exchange Florida for Louisiana.\(^{16}\) Although such an offer could not find favor with the United States, it showed at least, that Spain was no longer entirely opposed to the surrender of Florida on proper terms. Adams immediately took charge of the affair with more than his accustomed devotedness. In 1818 negotiations were brought sharply to a standstill by the news of Jackson's war against the Seminoles. In the autumn of the preceding year, 1817, these savages aided by a large number of Creeks had ravaged the frontiers of Georgia and Alabama. Spain failed to restrain them from attacking the Americans, as by treaty she was bound to do. General Gaines was sent to reduce them, but when his force proved too weak to accomplish this end, Jackson was dispatched with a larger army.\(^{17}\)

Jackson had shared with his countrymen the expectation that Florida must eventually belong to the United States. With his neighbors of the Southwest, he looked askance at Monroe's slow diplomatic maneuvering toward

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17. J.S. Bassett, The Life of Andrew Jackson, 266.
that acquisition and believed that force would sooner or later be used in spite of the Constitution. He was far from displeased, then, with the commission which placed him and his army on the outskirts of the coveted possession. His orders even allowed him to follow the enemy into Spanish territory, though they forbade him to attack a Spanish port. Jackson, finding the limitation onerous and considering it unwise, applied to Monroe for private permission to occupy Florida and hold it as an indemnity for the outrages Spain had permitted, and even incited the Indians to commit. He concluded:

"This can be done without implicating the government. Let it be signified to me through any channel ... that the possession of the Floridas would be desirable to the United States, and in sixty days it will be accomplished." 19

There is no need here to go into the story of the authorization which Jackson claimed he received and which Monroe denied he had ever given. It is a case of word against word, and judging from another letter of Monroe's to be quoted later and which Bassett himself calls "as barefaced a connivance at trickery as a President of the United States could well commit," 20 Monroe's word was no better than Jackson's. Suffice it to say that with or without authorization, Jackson marched into Florida, seized St. Marks and Pensacola, raised the American flag over the Spanish province, and approved the execution of two Englishmen, Arbuthnot and Ambrister who had been court-martialed and found guilty of inciting the Indians. 21 All this caused great agitation in the United States where foreign complications were:

19. Ibid., 246.
20. Ibid., 275.
21. Ibid., 252-255.
naturally feared and Jackson was severely blamed by those in power, though his compatriots at large approved his course heartily.

The first country, and the easiest, to reckon with was England. Though Lord Castlereagh declared to the American minister "that had the English Cabinet but held up a finger war would have been declared against the United States," Adams' instructions to Ambassador Rush convinced the British that no just cause of war existed between the two countries.

Spain was now to be pacified, and if Adams required diplomacy to reckon with her, he needed no less savoir faire to treat with the American president and his Cabinet.

It was on May 24, 1818, that Jackson entered Pensacola; Barrancas, its Governor, surrendered on May 28. In the middle of June, Onis, the Spanish Ambassador received official information of the invasion from the Governor of West Florida. He was indignant and protested vigorously.

Pizarro, the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs, was equally displeased, but contented himself with a milder protest, believing that Jackson would be disavowed.

Therein lay the crux of the difficulty between Adams and Monroe.

The president wished to disavow Jackson; Adams did not. We see his attitude in the following entry of his diary:

"July 15, 1818 - The President and all the members of the Cabinet, except myself, are of opinion that Jackson acted not only without, but against his instructions: that he has committed war upon Spain which

cannot be justified, and in which, if not disavowed by the Administration, they will be abandoned by the country. My opinion is that there was no real, though an apparent, violation of his instructions: that his proceedings were justified by the necessity of the case, and by the mis-conduct of the Spanish commanding officers in Florida. The question is embarrassing and complicated, not only as involving that of an actual war with Spain, but that of the Executive power to authorize hostilities without a declaration of war by Congress. There is no doubt that defensive acts of hostility may be authorized by the Executive; but Jackson was authorized to cross the Spanish line in pursuit of the Indian enemy."26

The last sentence of the above quotation shows the dilemma in Adams' mind. Evidently he thought that Monroe had exceeded his authority in the instructions which he had given Jackson. To repudiate Jackson, would then, weaken the President's position, not only with a commanding officer in the army but with a large mass of the people who were acclaiming him vociferously.

At the next Cabinet meeting the opinion was still as unanimously against Jackson as at the first, and so the affair continued,27 Adams alone upholding the general. At the meeting on July 21 Jackson's fate seemed to be settled. Adams read the letter he had written to Onis censuring, at Monroe's command, Jackson's conduct. Attorney General Wirt read his article for The National Intelligencer, which was to inform the country of the mind of the Administration. To this article Adams strongly objected, especially to a paragraph declaring that the President thought he had no constitutional power to have authorized General Jackson to take Pensacola. He concludes:

27. Ibid., IV, 109-113.
"I finally gave up the debate, acquiescing in the determination which had been taken. But the mischief on this determination lies deeper: 1. It is weakness, and confession of weakness. 2. The disclaimer of power in the Executive is of dangerous example and of evil consequences. 3. There is injustice to the officer in disavowing him, when in principle he is strictly justifiable."

But though Adams seemed to have been defeated, once again he had swayed the President to his side of the argument. Four days later, without any preamble, Monroe informed him that he had revised the article to be published in The National Intelligencer and had struck out some passages to which Adams had objected. These were those which had disclaimed the Executive's power.

The final decision of the attitude to be assumed by the Administration concerning the Florida question may be summed up thus: 1. Adams was commissioned to replace the first draft of his letter to Onis by another merely announcing that Pensacola and St. Mark's would be given up. 2. Monroe volunteered to write a letter to Jackson calculated to soften this blow and preserved his good will by explaining the constitutional objections to the acquisition of Florida by invasion.

It is in Monroe's letter to Jackson, previously described as a "barefaced a connivance at trickery" that we see how completely he intended to assume the attitude that he had never censured Jackson. All the complaints he had formerly held against him, Monroe now, "ingeniously dis-

29. Ibid., IV, 117.
30. Ibid., IV, 119.
31. Ibid., IV, 268.
32. Ibid., IV, 275.
torted,"33 into evidence in Jackson's favor. There is not one word said as to Adams' championship; rather does Monroe insinuate that Secretary of War Calhoun, who was bursting with rage over the affair, had been Jackson's friend in need. 34 To be fair to Monroe, it must be said that he probably had no thought of doing an injustice to Adams whom he respected deeply; he could not foresee the election of 1824 and so he could not foresee the harm that was to spring from the false opinion he had created in Jackson's mind. What is pertinent to this paper lies in the fact that Monroe did not wish it known that he had ever thought of repudiating Jackson.

As for the cession of Florida, Adams' management of the Jackson crisis seems to have hastened rather than hindered the negotiations. The strong statement of Adams' official message to the Spanish government, which follows, was not lost upon Pizarro:

"If as the commanders both at Pensacola and St. Marks have alleged, this had been the result of their weakness rather than of their will; if they have assisted the Indians against the United States to avert their hostilities from the province which they had not sufficient force to defend against them ... it must carry demonstration irresistible to the Spanish government that the right of the United States can as little compound with impotence as with perfidy, and that Spain must immediately make her election, either to place a force in Florida adequate to the protection of her territory ... or to cede to the United States a province of which she retains nothing but the nominal possession, but which is in fact a derelict open to the occupancy of every enemy of the United States, and serving no other earthly purpose than as a post of annoyance to them."35

34. Ibid., IV, 277.
35. Ibid., IV, 270.
The treaty with Spain was signed on February 22, 1819, and ceded to the United States East and West Florida with the adjacent islands. Adams wrote in triumphant strain the day the treaty was signed:

"The acquisition of the Floridas has long been an object of earnest desire to this country. The acknowledgment of a definite line of boundary to the South Sea forms a great epoch in our history. The first proposal of it in this negotiation was my own ... It was not even among our claims by the Treaty of Independence with Great Britain. It was not among our pretensions under the purchase of Louisiana - for that gave us only the range of the Mississippi and its waters." 36

All his life he considered this negotiation the greatest service he had rendered to his country, and it seems significant that in the several allusions he makes to it in his diary during later years, never once does he mention Monroe as a possible upsetter of his well laid plans. Had Adams been of a less loyal nature, he might easily have vaunted this victory over his Chief, at least in the privacy of his diary. But he did not. Nor did he set the modern fashion of showing "the real man" in the biography which he later wrote of Monroe. 37 It seemed to the Secretary quite natural that the President should receive the credit for the achievements of his administration, and Adams himself gave this credit to Monroe lavishly.

In fact, John Quincy Adams seemed to be a believer in chivalry. Did this faith in a relic of feudalism come from the European education so much decried by his enemies? One would like to think not, for to follow such a line of argument would be to conclude that chivalry is undesirable in a democracy. Adams did not think so. He thought it quite desirable - quite compatible with republican government. It was part of his attitude toward 36. Memoirs and Diary of John Q. Adams, C.F. Adams, IV, 270.
37. Ibid., IV, 293.
the presidency.
CHAPTER V

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS — NATIONALIST

The Monroe Doctrine belongs to world history, more particularly to American history, and still more specifically to the life of John Quincy Adams. But the present paper is not in any sense a biography of Adams. It is simply a study of a single phase of Adams' multi-colored career, namely, of his attitude toward the presidency. From this point of view then, and from this point of view alone, will the history of the Monroe Doctrine be considered. Only such portions of its national and international implications will be discussed as bear directly on the influence which John Quincy Adams exerted in order to have the policy defined.

In 1815 Russia and Austria formed the so-called Holy Alliance to protect the sacred rights of absolute monarchy threatened throughout the civilized world. When Spain revolted against Ferdinand VII in 1820, a European Congress was called by the Alliance and by its direction the French in 1823 for a second time restored the Spanish Bourbons. The grateful Ferdinand suggested that the revolution of the Spanish colonies ought to be put down by a common effort of the European powers, and the Holy Alliance promised with warmth that they would consider the situation. England, who had refused an invitation to join the Holy Alliance, was alarmed. Her interests were closely allied, as we have seen, with the success of the new republics which furnished her with valuable markets. She had furnished the
colonies both open and covert assistance when they were in revolution, but now she hesitated to do so, being little disposed to act single handed against the Holy Allies. In her dilemma she approached the United States. George Canning, Minister of Foreign Affairs, in a confidential talk to the American Ambassador, Richard Rush, proposed a joint Anglo-American manifesto declaring that Spain's loss of her American colonies was irremediable; that neither England nor the United States wished to claim any portion of them, but that they would not view with indifference the transfer of any portion of them to any other country.\(^1\) Adams comments laconically on Canning's project, that it is not aimed at the Holy Alliance,

"but really or especially against the acquisition to the United States themselves of any part of the Spanish-American possessions.\(^2\)

The Cabinet meeting which discussed the proposal met on November 7, 1823, and the line-up of opinion confided by Adams to his diary is of great interest. Calhoun was inclined to grant Rush discretionary power to join in the desired declaration even at the cost of promising not to take Cuba or Texas. He thought it advantageous to get from Great Britain the same declaration that the United States would make. Adams thought the case not parallel, and while deprecating any intention of seizing Cuba or Texas, believed the way should be left open for that emergency should it arise. He argued:

"The inhabitants of either or both may exercise their primitive rights, and solicit a union with us. They will certainly do no such thing to Great Britain."\(^3\)

1. Memoirs and Diary of John Quincy Adams, C.F. Adams, VI, 103.
2. Ibid., VI, 103.
3. Ibid., VI, 104.
Adams thought, moreover, that in communications lately received from the Russian ambassador, Baron de Tuyl, might be found a loophole of escape. Already in Adams' communications with this Baron, the principles of the Monroe Doctrine had been stated. On July 17, 1823 Adams had warned him in regard to the Northwest Coast question that we should contest the right of Russia to any territorial establishment on this continent and that we should assume distinctly the principle that the American continents were no longer subjects for any new European colonial establishments. The idea he now suggested was well received, and Adams read the draft he had already prepared for his answer to de Tuyl.

The next day Adams found the President "altogether unsettled," and "alarmed, far beyond anything I could have conceived possible," with Calhoun standing by stimulating his panic so that the President appeared "entirely to despair of the cause of South America." All this was for fear that the Holy Allies were about to restore all of South America to Spain. Here a deft touch shows that Adams studied his Chief's psychology. To the description of Monroe's despondency he adds placidly:

"He will recover from this in a few days; but I never saw more indecision in him."6

Another evidence of this indecision was evident in Monroe's frantic quest for advice which he did not follow when it was given. Canning's confidential letter to Rush was dated August 20, 1823. Shortly after he received the correspondence, Monroe sent copies of it to Jefferson and Madison. Jefferson's reply stated that he thought the proposal more

4. Memoirs and Diary of John Quincy Adams, - C.F. Adams, VI, 100.
5. Ibid., VI, 120.
6. Ibid., VI, 303.
important than anything that had happened since the American Revolution and that he approved of acceding to the proposals with a view to pledging Great Britain against the Holy Allies, though he did think Cuba would be a valuable acquisition to the Union. Madison's reply was less enthusiastic. He believed with Adams that,

"Great Britain was more impelled by her interest than by a principle of general liberty."  

At the next Cabinet meeting Adams felt that he had discovered the source of the President's despondency with regard to the South American affairs. His diary notes:

"Calhoun is perfectly moon-struck by the surrender of Cadiz and says the Holy Alliance with 10,000 men will restore all Mexico and all South America to the Spanish dominion." 8

The Diary entries of the next few days illustrate so clearly Adams' technique in handling Monroe, and its resultant effect on Monroe's thinking that they deserve to be studied in some detail. On November 15, we see Monroe in a panic about the Holy Alliance and Adams ending the long and fruitless discussion by saying that the whole answer to Canning should be put to the test of right or wrong. The South American republics being independent nations, they themselves had the right to dispose of their condition; we had no such right either alone or in conjunction with other nations. This appealed to Monroe, and Adams was directed to draft a dispatch accordingly. 9

8. Ibid., VI, 145.
9. Ibid., VI, 169.
But Adams' first victory was not to last long. On November 20, Monroe had adopted Calhoun's idea of giving Ambassador Rush discretionary power to act jointly with the British government in case of any sudden emergency of danger, and Adams was directed to change the draft of his instructions to Rush accordingly. Adams remonstrated in his diary:

"I am utterly averse to it; and I told him that I thought the instructions should be explicit, authorizing him distinctly to act in specified contingencies and requiring him in all others to refer for every important measure to his government."\(^{10}\)

The next day there was a Cabinet meeting which lasted from one till four. Adams brought his instructions to Rush with the President's changes. The diary notes:

"There was a long discussion upon one phrase which seemed to me to require none at all. The sentiment expressed was, that although we should throw no impediment in the way of an arrangement between Spain and her ex-colonists by amicable negotiation, we should claim to be treated by the South Americans upon the footing of equal favor with the most favored nation."\(^{11}\)

The phrase in question the President so changed as seemingly to admit:

"... that we should not object to an arrangement by which special favors, or even a restoration of authority, might be conceded to Spain. To this I strenuously objected as did Mr. Calhoun."\(^{12}\)

The President in the end acceded to the substance of the phrase as Adams desired, but required the original wording to be varied. Adams concludes:

\(^{10}\) Memoirs and Diary of John Quincy Adams, C.F. Adams, VI, 190.  
\(^{11}\) Ibid., VI, 193.  
\(^{12}\) Ibid., VI, 194.
"The final paper though considerably varied from my original draft will be conformable to my own views."13

At this same meeting Adams mentioned a plan which ultimately proved to be the solution to Great Britain's proposal, though at the time the connection was apparently not realized by any one but Adams himself. This desire was to prepare a confidential statement for Baron de Tuy1 with whom he had recently exchanged verbal communications on the South American question. The statement as here first sketched by Adams is so important as the foreshadowing of the Monroe Doctrine that it demands quotations in full:

"My purpose would be in a moderate and conciliatory manner, but with a firm and determined spirit, to declare our dissent from the principles avowed in those communications, to assert those upon which our own government is founded, and, while disclaiming all intention of attempting to propagate them by force, and all interference with the political affairs of Europe, to declare our expectation and hope that the European powers will equally abstain from the attempt to spread their principles in the American hemisphere, or to subjugate by force any part of these continents to their will."14

This idea the President approved. He then read to his Cabinet some notes he had made for his next message to Congress. Adams writes:

"The introduction was in a tone of deep solemnity and of high alarm, intimating that the country is menaced by imminent and formidable dangers such as would probably soon call for their most vigorous energies and closest union."15

It then proceeded to speak of the foreign entanglements, chiefly according to the sketch Adams had given him some days before, but with some variations. There was pointed reprobation of the French invasion of Spain,

15. Ibid., VI, 194.
and a broad acknowledgment of the new Greek republic, with a recommendation to Congress to make an appropriation for sending a Minister to that country. 16

With all this Calhoun agreed, but Adams freely expressed his wish that the President would reconsider the whole subject before he should determine on that course. The tone of the introduction seemed to the Secretary likely to take the nation by surprise and thus alarm the people. It would be, he thought, a call to arms against all Europe, and for objects of policy, conclusively European. "It would be," he ended, "as new too, in our policy as it would be surprising." 17

The next day Adams again reverted to the burning subject. Alone with the President he urged the latter to abstain from everything in his message which the Holy Allies could make a pretext for construing into aggression upon them. There were reasons for this attitude, Adams explained, which he could not easily mention even at a Cabinet meeting. These were based on a consideration of Monroe's Administration as one which would hereafter "be looked back to as the golden age of this republic" and of a consequent desire on Adams' part that its end should correspond with its beginning; that is:

"... that the Administration might be delivered into the hands of the successor, whoever he might be, at peace and in amity with all the world." 18

If war were inevitable, Adams held it should be the American policy "to meet and not to make it."

17. Ibid., VI, 195.
18. Ibid., VI, 196.
The President was troubled about Greece, fearing that if he did not recommend the recognition of the Republic, Congress would press the matter as it had pressed that of the South American republics. Adams remained unruffled. He did not think it would. Clay had urged the recognition of the Spanish republics in order to embarrass the administration; now that he had some prospect of coming to the succession himself, Adams did not suppose he would wish it encumbered by a quarrel with all Europe. But be that as it might, it was infinitely better that the impulse should come from Congress than that it should go from the Executive. If Congress puts the nation in trouble with the Allies, then "be the blame on them." By this discussion Monroe seemed much satisfied and promised to reconsider his message carefully and to call a meeting of the Cabinet when his new draft was prepared. On November 24 Adams notes in his diary that Monroe read him the new passage respecting the Greeks, Spain, Portugal and South America and that he thought it "quite unexceptionable" and in the spirit he had so pressingly urged the preceding Friday and Saturday. 

The day following Adams' second victory, we see the Monroe Doctrine taking shape more clearly in its final form. Adams had made a draft of observations upon communications he had received from the Russian minister. These observations, he proposed to the Cabinet, should be delivered verbally and unofficially and "modified as the President should direct," to Baron de Tuyl. This draft "corresponded exactly with a paragraph of the President's message which he read me yesterday" and which was the expression of "the system of policy which I have earnestly recommended for 19. Memoirs and Diary of John Quincy Adams, C.F. Adams, VI, 198.
this emergency." The much discussed paragraph was an exposition of the principles of the American government and a brief development of the political system to be maintained: a government,

"... essentially republican - maintaining its own independence, and respecting that of others; essentially pacific - studiously avoiding all involvement in the combinations of European politics, cultivating peace and friendship with the most absolute monarchies ... but declaring that we could not see with indifference any attempt by European powers ... to introduce monarchical principles into those countries ...." 

It is interesting to consider that of all the Cabinet, it was John Quincy Adams alone, who, from the beginning, dared to face the possible effects of such an announcement. He, whose European education and experience were continually flaunted by his enemies as proof of his monarchical tendencies, was not only the father but the most courageous defender of America's policy of isolation. The struggle to have it promulgated by the President was almost over, but as usual, the darkest moment was just before the dawn.

The paragraph in question was considered "a hornet of a paragraph" and Attorney General Wirt asked a question which Adams had already considered with much trepidation. What would follow if the Holy Allies should act in direct hostility to South America? Would the United States take up arms? Adams' answer was two-fold: First, that the difficult paragraph was founded on the idea that opposition to the Holy Alliance if offered, should be based upon exclusively American grounds; that we should separate it from all European concerns and disclaim all intention of interfering with them. Second, that while he considered the objections of Mr. Wirt of the deepest

21. Ibid., VI. 200.
22. Ibid., VI. 207.
moment, and knew that if they prevailed neither the draft to de Tuyl nor that of the President's message would be proper, still he could not abandon his position. Supposing the Holy Allies did subdue South America, what would be the result? They would re-colonize it; Russia might take California, Peru and Chili; France, Mexico; and Great Britain as her last resort would take at least the island of Cuba for her share in the scramble. The danger had been brought to our own doors and we could not too soon take our stand to repel it. Or, supposing Great Britain defeated the Allies, the South American States would then become her colonies. Everything pointed to the need of prompt and decisive action.

But, in spite of this reasoning, Adams received a note from the President on November 27 advising him to omit all the paragraphs to which objection had been made at the Cabinet meetings! Accordingly, he directed a copy to be made omitting all the passages marked by the President for omission, save one. Then calling on his Chief he told him he cheerfully gave them all up except that one, and pleaded for its retention. It was the heart of the paper. It was an exposition of principle. Adams pleaded well.

"The President retained the paper to determine finally upon it tomorrow morning."24

The Diary contains no further comment until after the epoch making message had been delivered on December 2. It embodied all of Adams' proposals.

That same day Adams records without a comment a conversation which he had with the formidable Clay on the subject of the message. It may be

23. Ibid., VI, 208.
24. Ibid., VI, 208.
epitomized in one sentence of that ardent Republican. - "The part relating to foreign affairs was the best part of the message." 25

And so ended this momentous controversy, perhaps the most momentous in our history. Even at the risk of a digression it is hard to omit one little incident of those days of drafts and revisions. Obedient to his Chief, Adams had revised a draft according to Monroe's instructions:

"He approved the draft of the second dispatch prepared for Richard Rush but inquired what was the particular meaning of one paragraph .... I told him that was for me to ask of him, as it was a paragraph in the amendment drawn by himself and in his own words, at which he heartily laughed ...." 26

In this way had Adams guided these weighty deliberations step by step to his own goal. There is no hint of clash. His strongest opposition consists in begging the President to reconsider before coming to a final decision. When Monroe signified a wish, Adams conformed immediately. And as a result, at the close of each episode he can record with truth, "With these views the President entirely agreed."

The election of John Quincy Adams to the presidency ought to have been, it would seem, the culmination of his career. Rather was it an anti-climax. It was a tragedy for him, and perhaps it was also a tragedy for his country. He belonged to the first generation of American presidents, men who believed they were elected to the presidency to lead their people, not to be led by the whims of their constituents. They remembered the helplessness of the days of the Confederation, and therefore were convinced that presidential power was a national blessing. The new generation was to rebel against the experience of the old. Would that rebellion have been less violent, less harmful, to the interests of the country had John Quincy Adams not been elected to the presidency? In spite of the apparent union of the "era of good feeling," the new elements in politics were latent. Johnston says their adherents were only impatiently awaiting the expiration of Monroe's second term when the enforced truce would expire. If that is true, the advent of a president who was the very incarnation of the old principles, would in itself have goaded them to resistance. And if in addition it could be said that the president had been forced upon them against their sovereign will, the result would be a revolution indeed.

John Quincy Adams was handicapped from the beginning of his presidency by just those circumstances. The election returns had not brought the required majority; Andrew Jackson had ninety-nine electoral votes, Adams eighty-four, William Crawford forty-one, and Henry Clay thirty-seven. The popular vote, so far as it could be ascertained was 150,000 for Jackson and 110,000 for Adams. The House of Representatives, to whom under the Constitution, the election now fell, decided on Adams, and Jackson at first accepted the result calmly. Within a few days, however, a rumor went abroad that Clay had sold his support of Adams for the appointment as Secretary of State. He denied it; Adams denied it; no proof has even been found of it. But Jackson's supporters were quick to see the damaging effect of such a charge and began the cry "Bargain and Corruption."²

The election had been made with all constitutional correctness. Adams was in every way the more suitable candidate; he represented principles acceptable to the large majority of voters; but the fact remained that Jackson had a large personal following, and Jackson represented the new order to which the pendulum was swinging. This party, though it had no platform, was now given a grievance; the will of "the people" had been thwarted by the alleged corrupt bargain. Being informed of this injustice by Jackson's managers, "the people" turned in rage upon Adams, and what was of more importance both to him and to his country, on all for which he stood. The history of his Administration was bound to be a history of defeat.

The program he cherished and confided to the nation in his inaugural address was an inheritance from Washington, and may be summed up in one word: union. But that word analyzed meant to them both three things: freedom from party spirit, but in Adams' case not from political parties which he believed were beneficial in a democracy; internal improvements, and a national university.

As a young man Adams had written:

"In a state of civil and political liberty, parties are to the public body what the passions are to the individual. Passions are the elements of life, and also a prolific source of misery as well as of enjoyment."5

And now in his inaugural he sought to alleviate that misery:

"There still remains one effort of magnanimity, one sacrifice of prejudice and passion to be made by the individuals throughout the nation who have heretofore followed the standards of political party. It is that of discarding every remnant of rancor against each other ... of yielding to talents and virtue alone...."6

The unimpassioned reasoning which follows carried the conviction of self-mastery and experience:

"The collisions of party spirit which originate in speculative opinions or in different views of administrative policy are in their nature transitory. Those which are founded on geographical divisions ... are more permanent and therefore, perhaps, more dangerous."7

6. Richardson, J., Messages & Papers of the Presidents, II, 297.
7. Ibid., II, 298.
It was these latter which he had in mind when he advocated his second idea of internal improvements, the theory perhaps closest to his heart.

He was, as he said, a "worshipper of internal improvement" and he prided himself on the fact that it was he who first suggested it as a system for Congress to pursue in a resolution offered to the Senate of the United States on February 23, 1807. Adams' resolution under another name brought forth Gallatin's well-known report, which Clay afterward advocated and which thus became the bond of union between himself and Adams.

In his first message to Congress Adams formulated his beloved doctrine: The object of the institution of civil government is the improvement of the condition of those over whom it is established. Roads and canals, by multiplying and facilitating the intercourse between distant regions and multitudes of men, are among the most important means of improvement, and this for the reason that a consolidated community must be the product of a social system resting on converging highways. Unlike Monroe, he had no doubts that Congress already possessed the constitutional power to authorize such internal improvements as were of a national character. These were to be, however, always subject to the territorial rights of the States in which they were made and to the proprietary rights of individuals. This theory he held to the end of his life, although he was never to see as he hoped:

"... the day, when the only question of our statesmen and patriots, concerning the authority of Congress to improve by public works..."
essentially beneficent, and beyond the means of less than national resources, the condition of our common country, will be, how it ever could have been doubted. 12

That at the beginning of Adams' administration the country seemed to be committed to the doctrine that Congress possessed full Constitutional rights to build works or to subscribe money to aid in their construction, and even to look forward to completing a general system of public improvement, and that at the end of his presidential term the project was growing unpopular may be ascribed to two causes: the embarrassment which Adams' enemies sought continually to bring upon his administration, and the vital question of States' rights.

The State of Virginia in particular, following the leadership of Jefferson and Madison, denounced Adams' plan. After his first message to Congress he was told by a Virginian Congressman that

"Excitement against the general government was great and universal in that state; that opinions there had been before divided, but that now the whole state would move in one solid column." 13

To apply the superfluous revenue to internal improvements was to fulfil the prophecy of Patrick Henry that "the Federal government would be a magnificent government." Thereupon the Virginia legislature declared internal improvements unconstitutional. 14 Adams had been warned by Attorney General Wirt, who had been travelling in Virginia, of the possible effect of his message. His diary notes on November 28, 1825:

14. Albert B. Hart, Formation of the Union, Epochs of America Series,
the increased price of the public lands, arising from the better means of communication, would in turn furnish a large and steadily increasing fund for national turnpikes and canals. But the rising tide of democracy was not enthusiastic about a system of scientific administration, either of the public domain or of internal improvements, and on July 20, 1834, Adams wrote in his diary:

"My own system of administration which was to make the national domain the inexhaustible fund for progressive and increasing internal improvement, has failed. Systematically renounced and denounced by the present administration, it has been undisguisedly abandoned by H.C. Clay, ingloriously deserted by J.C. Calhoun, and silently given up by D. Webster." 18

That he failed in this dearest of his hopes remained the abiding sorrow of his old age. He wrote in 1837 to Reverend Charles Upham:

"I fear I have done and can do little good in the world. And my life will end in disappointment of the good which I would have done had I been permitted. The great effort of my administration was to mature into a permanent and regular system the application of all the superfluous revenue of the Union to internal improvement which at this day would have afforded high wages and constant employment to hundreds of thousands of laborers.... The American Union, as a moral person in the family of nations, is to live from hand to mouth and to cast away instead of using for the improvement of its own condition, the bounties of Providence." 19

That the various sections of the country might still be bound together by railroads and canals half a century later, with the "limping gait of State legislature and private adventure," gave him small consolation when he thought of how he might have accomplished it in the administration of the

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17. (continued) 1825-1842. Riverside Press, Boston, 1914, p.3.
affairs of the nation. To him internal improvement was of all others a national project and he felt that the issue was not dead.

Since the days of his Secretaryship, the problem of internal improvements had been linked in his mind, with that of slavery. As a young man his policy had been: sacrifice everything rather than union." By this he was guided in the Embargo affair and again in the negotiations of Ghent. But with the discussion of the Missouri Compromise a new opinion seems to have formed in the mind of the staunch upholder of nationalism which must be quoted here for its later bearing:

"I have favored this Missouri Compromise, believing it to be all that could be effected under the present Constitution, and from extreme unwillingness to put the Union at hazard. But perhaps it would have been a wiser as well as a bolder course to have persisted in the restriction upon Missouri till it should have terminated in a convention of the States to revise and amend the Constitution. This would have produced a new Union of thirteen or fourteen States unpolluted with slavery, with a great and glorious object to effect, namely, that of rallying to their standard the other States by the universal emancipation of their slaves. If the Union must be dissolved, slavery is precisely the question upon which it ought to break." 22

Here was a change indeed, and a still greater was recorded in his diary two days later, March 5, 1820.

"I observed that I thought a convention might, in the course of a few years, be found necessary to remedy the great imperfections of the present system .... I added that there were three subjects, each of which might produce a state of things issuing in such a necessity. One was, the

22. Ibid., VI, 233.
regulation of the currency, banks, and paper money; another the impotence of the National Government to make internal improvements by roads and canals: and the third was slavery. 23

What does this prophecy show? Was John Quincy Adams a century before his time? Was his hatred of compromise the cause of his failure in the presidency? During the half century before the Civil War the North and the South were drifting ever further apart. Their interests, their political ideals, their ways of looking at every proposed piece of national legislation were different. The task of the Federal Administration was in reality to govern two distinct countries by legislation which would suit both of them. Laws in such a case must become compromises. The Missouri Compromise bore the name, but almost every other piece of Federal legislation of this half century was marked with the characteristics. Is an inability to compromise a sign of despotic tendencies? At any rate the people of the day considered it so, and, thus, Adams' theory of internal improvements was dubbed monarchical and magnificent.

It has been said that the term civilization, though it cannot be exactly defined, implies certain things: a city worthy of the name; some degree of political order and subordination; some degree of proficiency in the industrial arts, or at least in agriculture with some degree of manufacture; some proficiency in the fine arts, some knowledge of philosophy, history, and science; a written, or at least a pictured literature; and finally the existence of a leisured class. This civilization, it may be said, was what John Quincy Adams as president wanted to establish. Internal

improvements would make a country worthy of the name; the Constitution had provided the order and subordination; his theory of protection would increase proficiency in the industrial arts. There remained the fine arts and their concomitants; to develop proficiency in them, he favored, as had Washington, the establishment of a national university. Washington had written to John Adams, his Vice President:

"That a National University in this country is a thing to be desired, has always been my decided opinion; and the appropriation of ground and funds for it in the Federal City have long been talked of ...."24

Certainly Washington desired this University as a cultural aid for his people, but that he also intended it as a means for inspiring respect for the government can be inferred from the following passage in his first Message to Congress:

"To the security of a free constitution it contributes in various ways - by convincing those who are intrusted with the public administration that every valuable end of government is best answered by the enlightened confidence of the people and by teaching the people themselves to know and to value their own rights; ... to distinguish between oppression and the necessary exercise of lawful authority; between burthens proceeding from a disregard to their convenience and those resulting from the inevitable exigencies of society ...."25

The university was, then, to fix a standard of collective thought, and in that standard, respect for authority was to hold its place. For such a university Washington had made express provisions in his will,26 and it was such a university that Adams recommended to Congress in his first

25. J.D. Richardson, Messages and Papers of the Presidents, I, 66.
26. J. Quincy, Memoir of Life of John Q. Adams, 150.
annual message. Doubtless he, too, thought that it would inspire that respect for authority which had ever actuated him and which was ever growing less in the country at large. Adams feared its effects.

As the country had rejected his other proposals, so it rejected also his plan for a national university, but until the end of his life, Adams continued to teach that doctrine of respect for authority which the country would not establish a university to propagate. Nowhere did he do so more subtly than in his address in honor of the jubilee of the American Constitution delivered in New York in 1839. In a republic, he said, the administration must always be rendered conformable to the predominating public opinion, which even in the ages of heathen antiquity was denominated the queen of the world. What did the American people understand by a republic? To Adams himself it meant what it meant to Montesquieu, not a government reposing upon the virtues of one man, upon honor, which is the fundamental principle of monarchy; far less did it mean a government reposing upon fear which is the basis of despotism; but rather did it mean a government resting upon virtue. History has shown democracy to be, of all human governments, the most unstable, fluctuating, and short-lived. Why? Because the virtue of the people was so. The stability and duration of the virtue by which it is sustained. Where then could they look for the virtue to sustain the American Republic? In the Constitution, which was the concretion of the principles of the Declaration of Independence. Fidelity to the Constitution would be always the only safe program for political parties to follow.  

It was the program he had consistently followed, and here it may be well to stop and look back over his career. We have travelled with him far - through the days of his education and young manhood to his election as Chief Executive of the United States - and all in an effort to learn something of his attitude toward the presidency. It does not seem to much to suggest that his whole political life may be summed up in this attitude.

Briefly then, what was it? Attitude may perhaps be defined as a man's spirit toward an object. A spirit always comes from a motive. What then was John Quincy Adams' motive in life? To be President? It would seem not. True, great capability must have strengthened the natural ambition of this man who had served his country conspicuously since childhood. But no event in his life disproves the sincerity of his words in regard to office holding: "Never seek it, never refuse it." He accepted every office offered him - even when there were decided personal disadvantages involved with acceptance, as, for instance there were in connection with his appointment as Ambassador to Russia. He disdained no office as below his dignity. After having received the highest honors of the nation as President, he quite simply became a Congressman, representing the farming district of Plymouth. He did not consider it demeaning "to begin over again like a boy" as Clay wonderingly put it. Election after election his farmer friends chose him as their representative, well content with him, though he held himself accountable to no party and to no section. And year after year he returned gladly, until his death in the Hall of Congress brought an end to his labors for his country. Ambition was surely not among the essential

29. Ibid., III, 241.
characteristics of his attitude toward the presidency. He was not a mere politician looking for the politician's highest award. To be president was not his goal.

The motive which actuated him was far greater. The preceding chapters have tried to define it as patriotism, a patriotism so true that loyalty to the country's head emanated from it as a matter of course. Whether the President was a Federalist or a Republican mattered not. He was the President, and while he was President, John Quincy Adams would support him. The motive which prompted that support was not liege loyalty; it was a very democratic and Christian principle. Adams himself defined it in explanation of his attitude toward Thomas Jefferson:

"In any support I have given or ever will give to this or any other administration, I have been and shall be governed solely by public consideration and the belief that the administration aims at the welfare of the nation." 30

The Fathers of the Constitution held the same belief, and did not fear to give power to the leaders of the country, knowing full well that this power would always be in the hands of the people themselves. They must entrust it for certain defined purposes to representatives of their own choosing, but this trust was to be given only for a certain period of time. It seems to have been John Quincy Adams' motive in life to induce others to give that trust, that "enlightened confidence" which Washington had thought a national university could implant in the hearts of Americans. Washington himself had felt the need of such confidence sorely and had written concerning it:

"It is agreed on all hands that no government can be well administered without powers; yet the instant these are delegated, although those who are entrusted with the Administration are no more than creatures of the people, act as it were but for a day, and are amenable for every false step they take, they are from the moment they receive it, set down as tyrants; their natures they would conceive from this immediately changed and that they can have no other disposition but to oppress.... No man is a warmer advocate for proper restraints and wholesome checks in every department of government that I am; but I have never been able to discover the propriety of placing it absolutely out of the power of men to render essential services because a possibility remains of their doing ill."31

"Enlightened confidence" may, then, be called the essence of Adams' code of loyalty. About it he himself wrote:

"There is a candor and liberality of conduct and of sentiment due from associates in the same public charge towards each other necessary to their individual reputation, to their common influence, and to their public usefulness. In our republican government, where the power of the nation consists alone in the sympathies of opinion, this reciprocal deference, this open-hearted imputation of honest intentions is the only adamant at once attractive and impenetrable, that can bear unshattered all the thunder of foreign hostility. Ever since I have had the honour of a seat in the national councils, I have extended it to every department of the government .... Confidence is the only cement of an elective government. Election is the very test of confidence and its periodical return is the constitutional check upon its abuse; of which the electors of course must be the sole judges."32

People credited him with this loyalty. Yet the instant the presidential power was delegated to him, he was, as Washington said, "set down as a

tyrant." Andrew Jackson could write to Monroe in 1817:

"I have no hesitation in saying you have made the best selection to fill the department of state that could be made. Mr. Adams in the hour of difficulty will be an able helpmate and I am convinced his appointment will afford general satisfaction." 33

Yet in 1825 the same Jackson could think of the same Adams only as a despot. The people did not want an executive in whom they might repose "enlightened confidence." They wanted one who would humor them, whom they could control. The result was the defeat in 1828 "of one of the most conscientious of presidents because he could not withstand the tide of popular government then running strong, a movement much like that which carried his father and the federalist party to destruction in 1800." 34

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<td>Discourse on Death of John Quincy Adams, reprinted from Massachusetts Quarterly Review, Boston, 1848.</td>
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32. Massachusetts Legislature

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Secondary Sources

1. Adams, Henry


2. Adams, James T.


3. Bassett, John Spencer


4. " " "


5. Beard, Charles and Mary


6. Beveridge, Albert J.


7. Fish, Carl Russell

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<th>Number</th>
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BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

Source Material

With little exception, the material for this thesis had been drawn from primary sources, which divide themselves into five classes: two biographies, written by men who knew John Quincy Adams intimately; a series of eulogies and sermons given at the time of his death; his own diary, letters, speeches, and papers; the letters and papers of contemporaries; and several governmental documents.

Of the biographies, The Life and Public Services of John Quincy Adams by William Seward, and Memoir of the Life of John Quincy Adams, by Josiah Quincy, the first volume is more satisfactory. The narrative is simple and exact, and references to the letters and papers of Mr. Adams are copious and well chosen. Mr. Quincy's biography may excel, perhaps, in historical background. Both books are really remarkable for truth and have not at all that imaginative turn of mind so prevalent in many of the memoirs of the period.

Among the surprisingly interesting writings of the time are the sermons occasioned by the death of Mr. Adams. These are published in pamphlet form and serve not only as little biographies of the man, in which there are oftentimes valuable details, but as splendid commentaries and analyses of the political and social life of the age. Of those used for
this thesis, the eulogies taken from the *Annals* of the 30th Congress, 1st Session, 1847-1848, entitled, *Tokens of a Nation's Sorrow; Discourse on the Death of John Quincy Adams*, by Theodore Parker, Minister of the 28th Congregational Church in Boston; *Discourse at Quincy at the Interment of John Quincy Adams*, by William Parsons Lunt; *A Sermon on the Occasion of the Death of John Quincy Adams*, by Stedman W. Hanks; and a *Sermon in Memory of John Quincy Adams*, by Frederick Farley, would serve most useful for general information regarding the man and the time.

Most valuable for this topic were, of course, the two collections of John Quincy Adams' personal writings: *The Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, Comprising Portions of His Diary from 1795 to 1848*, XII Volumes, edited by his son, Charles Francis Adams; and *The Writings of John Quincy Adams*, VII Volumes, edited by Worthington Chauncey Ford. This latter work is still in progress. The two works supplement each other, but both have a decided drawback - they are too much edited. The reader feels that details are omitted which would prove most valuable. The Diary in particular is strewn with hiatuses which make it much less of a human document than it surely must have been, judging from what is there and from *Life in a New England Town, 1787-1788*, the wholly un-edited diary of Adams when he was a law student in the office of Theophilus Parsons. To be confronted with such omissions is a disappointment to one who admires John Quincy Adams and cannot help feeling that many of the ...'s which the editor has sprinkled throughout his work stand for the sympathy and charm which history, dependent on the diary, have denied the sixth president of the United States. Such omissions are, of course, very understandable when one considers the
inherited sensitiveness of his son, and the biographical custom of an earlier age, as well as the voluminous quantity of writing that came from the pen of John Quincy Adams. The Writings of John Quincy Adams edited by Worthington Chauncey Ford most disappointingly stop short at the year 1821. Fortunately they can in some cases be supplemented by letters published in such collections as The Bulletin of the New York Public Library, where the correspondence with George Bancroft quoted in this paper was found, as was likewise a hitherto unpublished correspondence between John Quincy Adams and his father, John Adams. One can well see how Letters from Silesia, written by John Quincy Adams during a tour through that country in 1800 and 1801, occasioned a furor when they were published in London in 1804 without his knowledge or consent. They are filled with fascinating detail concerning men and events of the time, and are further evidence of the fact that the unedited John Quincy Adams is more educative as well as more lovable. The Abridged Diary of John Quincy Adams edited by Allen Nevins is very valuable, containing the narrative rather than the speculative passages from the twelve volume edition of Charles Francis Adams.

Concerning the speeches and papers of John Quincy Adams, there is little to be said. All are logical, unequivocal, uncompromising, yet liberal and appealing, and even in those composed by the youth, one can see the father of the "Old Man Eloquent." Of those read, the following proved most useful because of their exposition of prevailing ideas of government: An Answer to Paine's Rights of Man; Discourse Delivered in Honour of the Jubilee of the Constitution at the Request of the New York Historical Society; The New England Confederacy of MDCXLIII; and the eulogies delivered
in honor of James Madison and James Monroe. The biographies of these two former presidents by Mr. Adams were also suggestive evidence of the extreme respect he had for them as former incumbents of the presidential office.

Among the writings of contemporaries, The Works of Fisher Ames, edited by Seth Ames, is a storehouse of extreme New England federalism; beside it may stand Peace without Dishonor - War without Hope by John Lowell, a sparkling exposition of the intense convictions of the leading New England federalists. Both writers are typical of the time and section, the latter author being the son of one of the federal judges appointed by John Adams under the Federal Judiciary Act of 1801. Edward Everett's paper on The Monroe Doctrine is interesting chiefly from the standpoint that he, a contemporary, had apparently little idea of John Quincy Adams' connection with its issuance, and is extremely inaccurate but complimentary, about the action of George Canning in the affair. The Diary of Philip Hone is an interesting but pessimistic account of the times as seen through the eyes of a popular, energetic, and ambitious, but conceited New Yorker. The Life and Letters of Joseph Story may also be classed as source material since it is almost entirely composed of letters written by the great people of the day. The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, edited by Paul L. Ford, The Writings of James Monroe, edited by Stanislaus M. Hamilton, and The Writings of George Washington, edited by Worthington Chauncey Ford, are invaluable collections, annotated in a most helpful way.

Nothing need be said of James D. Richardson's Messages and Papers of the Presidents or of the American State Papers which are mere collections.
Secondary Material

The Degradation of the Democratic Dogma by Henry Adams, with an introduction by Brooks Adams, his brother, both grandsons of John Quincy Adams, is an attempt to show the similarity of mind between John Quincy Adams and Henry Adams. Possibly, Mr. Brooks Adams proves his point, but his work is too atheistic to read, certainly anything but a characteristic of the writings of the great statesman, his grandfather. The book does, however, contain a number of John Quincy Adams' unpublished letters, and from that point of view is valuable. Mr. James Truslow Adams, who is no relation whatsoever to the famous Adams family in whom he has such interest, is the author of a psychological study called The Adams Family. It may be characterized as popular, and therefore somewhat melodramatic and sentimental history, yet its possessions of sufficient truth and judgment furnish worthwhile topics for consideration and investigation.

Of the general histories used, McMasters' History of the People of the United States is, of course, the standard and most satisfactory of all. Woodrow Wilson's History of the American People has reliable and well-told information also, with the drawback that it is not annotated and has not a bibliography, and is, perhaps, too persuasive in its opinions. John S. Bassett's Short History of the United States is splendid as a handy reference, and Albert B. Hart's little book Formation of the Union is admirable in its pithiness. The Political and Sectional Influence of the Public Lands, 1828-1842 by Raynor G. Wellington is scholarly, well-documented, and
extremely readable, but Beard's *Rise of American Civilization* is vague
and restricted to generalities. *American Diplomacy* by Carl Russell Fish
is an excellent work, scholarly, entertaining, and thoroughly documented,
with an enormous amount of information in compact form. Mr. Johnston's
essay on *The Formation of Political Parties* is part of the invaluable
compilation of Justin Winsor's *Narrative and Critical History of America*.

Three biographies included in the secondary material are distinct
masterpieces, but of the three, *The Life of John Marshall* by Albert J.
Beveridge takes first place. It is an historical and literary classic
with exhaustive annotations and bibliography. John Spencer Bassett's
*Life of Andrew Jackson* is impartial and sympathetic as a biography and
excellent as interpretative history. *The Life and Letters of Harrison
Grey Otis, Federalist*, by Samuel Eliot Morrison is very readable and gives
a fund of information. Two other biographies: *George Washington* by Paul
Leicester Ford and *George Washington* by Woodrow Wilson were also used.
The first is a psychological study rather than a biography, and was less
satisfactory than the second, which is literary and inspiring but still
accurate and full of information.
The thesis, "The Attitude of John Quincy Adams toward the Presidency," written by Mother Helen Tichenor, R.S.C.J., has been accepted by the Graduate School of Loyola University with reference to form, and by the readers whose names appear below, with reference to content. It is, therefore, accepted as a partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Loyola University.