Preface

Historians frequently abuse the concept of personal influence. The assumption that an older and more illustrious individual affected the conduct of a susceptible young contemporary is easy to make and hard to refute when there is an apparent similarity of conduct on the part of the two men.

Seldom, however, does the biographer have as much evidence for such a belief as in the case of Washington and Lafayette. Not only did other contemporaries insist that Lafayette's imitation of the American general was obvious, but Lafayette himself freely admitted that he regarded his friend as a model. The Prince de Talleyrand, after having observed Lafayette for about half a century stated that "he always acts as though he follows someone else's advice,"[1] and the Italo-American Philip Mazzei, who knew both Washington and Lafayette personally, expressed the more explicit opinion that Lafayette "made it a law to imitate General Washington in everything."[2]

The reader of the letters that are presented in this volume will find Lafayette himself time and again frankly avowing his spiritual indebtedness to his "father and friend." One such avowal will suffice here to illustrate them all. "I hope you will approuve [*sic*] my conduct," he wrote in his letter of June 29, 1782, "and in every thing I do I first consider what your opinion would be had I an opportunity to consult it." These avowals, taken together with Lafayette's conduct and his frequent declarations of devotion, leave no doubt about the genuineness of Washington's influence upon him. "It is an extraordinary phenomenon," said Mme de Staël, who well knew the social milieu from which Lafayette came, "that a character like M. de Lafayette should have developed among the highest ranks of the French nobility."[3] At least a partial explanation of that phenomenon

[1] Duc de Broglie (ed.), *Memoirs of the Prince de Talleyrond* (tr. R. Ledos de Beaufort; 5 vols.; New York, 1891-92), I, 52-53.

[2] *Recherches historiques et politiques sur les États-Unis de l'Amérique septenrionale* (4 vols.; Paris, 1788), IV, 117 and n.

[3] Duc de Broglie and Baron de Staël (eds.), *Considérations sur les principaux événemens de la Révolution française* (3 vols.; Paris, 1818), I, 271.

—as Mme de Staël herself recognized—is to be found in the high regard of the young French aristocrat for the austere Virginia planter and soldier.

The friendliness of Lafayette for Washington developed rather quickly. That of Washington for Lafayette was not only slower to mature but even at its highest point was circumspect and restrained. That was not only because of the Gallic ebullience of the one and the Anglo-Saxon sternness of the other; it was also because Lafayette, always ready to go to great pains to oblige his friends, seldom felt any inhibitions about asking favors, though Washington sometimes found it embarrassing to grant them. No matter how prominent Lafayette became, Washington always remained in a position of greater prestige; and politics frequently imposed restraints upon friendly considerations.

The old story that Lafayette came to America because he had heard the Duke of Gloucester speak with admiration of the Americans must now be discarded.[4] He came for several reasons but prominent among them was the instigation of the Comte de Broglie, who—probably without Lafayette's suspecting it—was hopeful of becoming commander-in-chief of the American army. Nevertheless, when the Marquis de Lafayette, an inexperienced stripling still in his teens, applied to Congress for a major-general's commission in the Continental Army, he said that one of his principal motives in coming to America had been to see service under General Washington.

Lafayette did not meet Washington until shortly after receiving his major-general's commission. The occasion of their first meeting was a dinner at the City Tavern in Philadelphia on July 31, 1777. Washington invited the young soldier to become a member of his military "family" for the ensuing campaign. Lafayette was struck by the majesty of Washington's face and figure; and Washington felt that the short young Frenchman with sparkling hazel eyes, long pointed nose, receding brow and reddish hair who had just been made a volunteer major-general by Congress was worthy of "esteem and attachment."[5]

[4]Louis Gottschalk, *Lafayette comes to America* (Chicago, 1935), pp. 50-51 and *passim*.
[5]Louis Gottschalk, *Lafayette joins the American Army* (Chicago, 1937), pp. 27-29. Hereafter quotations that are not otherwise accredited will be borrowed either from this work or its sequel, *Lafayette and the close of the American Revolution* (Chicago, 1942).

Lafayette, assuming that Congress intended the actual command of a division to accompany the rank of major-general, expected that the division would be given to him whenever Washington saw fit to do so. He therefore importuned the commander-in-chief, who had begun to resent foreign soldiers of fortune who expected high rank in the American army, for the actual command of a division. Upon inquiry Washington found that Lafayette's appointment had been purely honorary. It might have gone hard with the impatient volunteer if, at the same time, Washington had not received a request from Franklin, then in France, to take special care of the marquis, who had influential connections in his own country.

Washington took an early occasion to speak to the marquis. While informing Lafayette that certain objections to his being given a command existed in Congress, he attempted to soften that information. He assured the boy, at some length, of his own friendly and paternal regard. In doing so he acted partly from policy, partly from genuine liking. Lafayette, who had lost his own father when he was two and had developed no intimacy with the older men of his acquaintance, responded immediately. From the time of that conversation at Germantown in August, 1777, he gave to his "dear general" the most ardent devotion—part friendship, part hero-worship. Still little more than a boy, he took with complete absence of restraint the mature Washington's invitation to regard him as both friend and father.

Lafayette did not, however, abandon his plea for a command—to the annoyance of the commander-in-chief. The assignment of a division to Baron Dekalb, whose commission bore the same date as Lafayette's though his professional experience was at that time clearly greater, was a particularly embarrassing circumstance. Fortunately for both Lafayette and Washington, who continued to feel the weight of the marquis' French connections, the young volunteer had been acquiring an enviable military record. Washington himself had cited him for bravery in the battle of Brandywine on September 11, 1777, where he received a leg wound that put him in the hospital for several weeks; and at the battle of Gloucester, on November 25, he had distinguished himself for both skill and gallantry. Washington therefore felt that he could fairly recommend that Congress give

Lafayette the command he solicited. The youthful Frenchman had, Washington said, much of the military ardor which distinguished the nobility of his country as a class, and besides, if he were to fail in his desire, he would probably return in disgust to France—a contingency which might have "unfavorable consequences." So Lafayette, who had recently passed his twentieth birthday, obtained his division.

The marquis was solicitous not only for himself but for the French officers who had come with him to America. His persistent requests that they be given commissions—requests which Washington felt that he could not support without unfairness to American officers who usually, unlike the Frenchmen, had already rendered service to the cause—sometimes put a severe strain upon the commander-in-chief. Fortunately Washington also realized that Lafayette compensated for his solicitude for Frenchmen in America by his efforts to present the American viewpoint as favorably as possible to his compatriots. "I do most devoutly wish," the commander-in-chief confessed, "that we had not a single foreigner among us, except the Marquis de Lafayette, who acts upon very different principles from those which govern the rest."[6]

The growing friendliness between the two soldiers reached a critical point shortly after Lafayette obtained his division. In the fairly intimate circle of French officers in the Continental Army, among the most cordial was the French-Irish soldier Thomas Conway, brigadier-general. Conway had become one of the several persons in prominent positions in the American army and Congress who doubted Washington's ability as a commander-in-chief and hoped for other leaders. The activity of this group—never closely or formally organized—became sufficiently well known to induce Washington and his "family" to believe that there was a veritable cabal to oust him. The opponents of Washington secured conspicuous honors for Conway, though Washington was known to distrust him. Consequently historians have frequently referred to this episode as the "Conway cabal," although the "cabal" seems never to have been any more than a confidential understanding among some opponents of

[6]Washington to Gouverneur Morris, July 24, 1778, J. C. Fitzpatrick (ed.), *The writings of George Washington from the original manuscript sources, 1745-1799* (37 vols.; Washington, 1931-40), XII, 227-28.

Washington and Conway was not the most important of them.[7]

The existence of a group that sought to replace Washington, as well as Conway's association with it, was not at first realized by Lafayette. Conway had won the marquis' good will because the older man was an excellent officer and a genial companion, because they had some mutual friends in France, and because they had planned together certain grandiose schemes that would enable both of them to play more brilliant rôles in the war. Their boldest plan involved an attack upon India.

When Lafayette received his division, the prospect of winning his meed of glory in America seemed brighter than any that a remote India might hold forth. And at the same time he began to believe that there existed a faction hostile to Washington and that Conway was a member of it. He did not hesitate in his choice of allegiance between the two men. "I am now fixed to your fate," he informed the commander-in-chief on December 30, 1777, "and I shall follow it and sustain it as well by my sword as by all means in my power."

Conway's partisans, not at first realizing what Lafayette's attitude toward Washington actually was and knowing only his passion for "glory," persisted in trying to exploit the marquis' prestige against the interest of Washington. They secured Lafayette's appointment by Congress to the independent command of an expedition against Canada, whose success was bound to cast Washington's military reputation in the shade. Conway was appointed second in command. Lafayette saw in this maneuver an opportunity to reconcile his own glory with his loyalty to Washington. He demanded and obtained another second. Dekalb superseded Conway, who now found himself third in authority. At the same time Lafayette made clear his devotion to Washington, taking an especially keen delight in having obliged the Board of War, whose members he suspected of ill-will toward his hero, to drink a toast to the commander-in-chief. He also protested against the independence of his expedition from Washington's command, though not hard enough to secure an alteration of the status that had been conferred upon him. Washington remained carefully aloof from the whole affair, except to write

[7]Cf. Bernhard Knollenberg, *Washington and the Revolution. A Reappraisal. Gates, Conway, and the Continental Congress* (New York, 1940), pp. 37-92, and Gottschalk, *Lafayette joins the American Army*, pp. 65-165. See also the latter's review of the former's book in *Journal of Modern History*, XIII (1941), 97-98.

to his "dear Marquis" consoling letters as the bungling of the expedition increased the young man's despair. Through no fault of Lafayette's, the proposed invasion proved abortive, and the discredit of its failure fell upon Conway and the Board of War. Lafayette returned to Valley Forge (having missed the worst part of the winter's suffering of the Continental Army) and soon added to his military reputation by his skillful tactics at Barren Hill (May 20, 1778).

The battle of Monmouth Court House (June 28, 1778), in which General Charles Lee's conduct laid him open to the charges both of disobedience to the orders of Washington and of incompetence, revealed to Lafayette another enemy of his adored leader. Lafayette, who had been on good terms with Lee, had not known before of Lee's sympathy with the opponents of Washington. Although Lafayette's conduct in this battle won him no military citations, the result of the engagement, so far as Lafayette and Washington were personally concerned, was to bring them closer together. On the night of the battle they rested on the same military cloak together and spoke of Lee.

Meanwhile, France had formally entered the war. Lafayette now assumed the rôle of principal liaison officer between the American and French forces. Washington, who had often been annoyed when Lafayette had exercised his talents on behalf of the French soldiers of fortune, now set considerable store by the young man's efforts. He sent him to Rhode Island, where a naval expedition under Count d' Estaing had arrived and was expected to help the American army to recapture Newport. A bad storm wrought havoc with Estaing's fleet, and the French admiral insisted that he must withdraw to Boston and refit his vessels. Feeling ran high on both sides. French sailors were attacked and killed in the streets of Boston. Lafayette's sensibilities as a Frenchman were outraged by the manner in which the American generals in New England spoke of Estaing. But Washington knew how to soothe his young friend's resentment. He appealed to Lafayette's love of publicity, as well as his genuine devotion to France, America, and his general. "America esteems your virtues and your services, and admires the principles upon which you act," wrote Washington.[8] "Your countrymen in our army look up to you as their patron. The Count and his officers con-

[8]September 1, 1778, Fitzpatrick, *Writings of Washington*, XII, 382-83.

sider you as a man high in rank, and high in estimation, here and in France; and I, your friend, have no doubt but that you will use your utmost endeavours to restore harmony, that the honour, glory, and mutual interest of the two nation's [*sic*] may be promoted and cemented in the firmest manner."

While Washington upon occasion thus appealed to the young man's ambition to play a notable rôle in affairs, while he also from the first encouraged in him an independent spirit by inviting criticism and suggestions with regard to military matters—an invitation of which Lafayette made frequent use—Washington never permitted himself to indulge his friend's love of glory when the marquis' projects seemed to him inimical to the best interests of the United States. Toward the close of the year 1778 Lafayette was again deeply involved with members of the Congress in another proposal for a Canadian expedition. This plan was defeated only by the most strenuous exertions of the two men who were his best friends among Americans in high office—Henry Laurens, president of Congress, and Washington himself. Washington afterward let Lafayette know what his opinion in the matter was, but he took care to conceal from his young friend the degree to which his influence had been responsible for thwarting the cherished plan.

About this time Lafayette went back to France on furlough. The parting of the two men was "touching and painful indeed." When Lafayette recalled it in later years,[9] he could not help remarking that, though Washington was frequently brusque, he had himself never experienced anything but kindness from his past commander. And as for Lafayette's attitude toward Washington? "How could he have been anything but cherished by his disciple—he who, uniting all that is good with all that is great, was even more sublime in his virtues than in his talents? As a simple soldier, he would have been the bravest; as an obscure citizen, all his neighbors would have respected him; with a heart as upright as his spirit, he judged himself as he did other matters. In creating him expressly for this revolution, Nature did herself honor, and the better to exhibit her handiwork, she put him in a position where no one of his qualities would have sufficed if it had not been enforced by all the others." Before

[9] *Mémoires, correspondance et manuscrits du général Lafayette publiés par sa famille* (6 vols.; Paris, 1837-38), I, 62.

Lafayette sailed, Washington sent him a letter affirming that "there is no need of fresh proofs to convince you either of my affection for you personally, or of the high opinion I entertain of your military talents and merit."[10] This letter contained another addressed to Franklin, still in Paris, in which Washington declared his "very particular friendship" for Lafayette and bespoke for him "whatever services you may have it in your power to render him."[11]

During Lafayette's sojourn in France (1779-80), his son was born. The baby was named George Washington Lafayette "as a tribute of respect and love for my dear friend." Washington's letters at this period reveal a marked increase in the warmth of his feeling for Lafayette. "Your ardent and persevering efforts," he wrote, "not only in America, but since your return to France, to serve the United States; your polite attention to Americans, and your strict and uniform friendship for *me*, has ripened the first impressions of the esteem and attachment, which I imbibed for you, into such perfect love and gratitude, that neither time nor absence can impair." Washington went on to say that he would welcome Lafayette "in all the warmth of friendship to Columbia's shores" whether as an officer in the French army or as a major-general in the American army again, "or whether, after our swords and spears have given place to the plowshare and pruning-hook, I see you as a private gentleman, a friend and companion."[12] And one day when the French ambassador and his secretary came to visit the American commander, Washington asked about Lafayette with unconcealed tenderness, declaring that he knew no nobler or finer soul and that he loved him as his own son.

When Lafayette returned to America (April, 1780) bearing the military recommendations of his government, he became more than ever the liaison officer between the Americans and the French, and especially between Washington and Rochambeau, commander of the French expeditionary force whose sailing the marquis had helped to arrange. Upon the arrival of Rochambeau in America, Washington, who was unable at the time to leave his post, sent Lafayette to represent him at a joint conference in Rhode Island. He assured Rochambeau that he had the greatest confidence in Lafayette. In agreement with Rochambeau, who somewhat resented his youthful

[10]December 29, 1778, Fitzpatrick, *Writings of Washington*, XIII, 460-61.

[11]December 28 [29?], 1778, *ibid.*, p. 459.

[12]September 30, 1779, *ibid.*, XVI, 369-70.

countryman's aggressiveness, Washington was soon called upon to overrule Lafayette's desire for an immediate combined attack upon New York. Yet he gave testimony of his confidence in Lafayette's abilities by appointing him, on his return from Rhode Island, to the command of a picked infantry corps known as the Light Division, which was to form the vanguard of the Continental Army in the event of an attack on New York, and he continued to encourage Lafayette to make schemes and feints towards that end.

Lafayette also served as interpreter and secretary in the meeting between Rochambeau and Washington which occurred in Hartford, Connecticut, in September, 1780. It was on the return from this meeting that both generals nearly fell victims to the treachery of Benedict Arnold. Only the chance arrest of the British major John André just at the time that they were visiting the Arnolds saved West Point from falling into British hands. As a result of the meeting at Hartford Lafayette became convinced that the command of American operations should be unified under Washington more explicitly than it then was or than Rochambeau seemed willing to permit, and in January, 1781, he so wrote to the French ministers, Castries and Vergennes.

To Lafayette's disappointment, the Light Division was disbanded before it had seen action. As the winter of 1780-81 promised to be a very dull one from the military standpoint, he thought up a plan for a Spanish diversion in which he would participate; but, like the proposed Canadian expeditions and the attack on New York, this did not appear to Washington to be feasible. Instead, Washington gave Lafayette, in February 1781, the command of another body, made up largely of light infantry. It was intended to check Arnold's depredations in Virginia,and it nearly captured the renegade. Arnold was relieved by reinforcements sent from New York, however.

Lafayette's expedition started back to headquarters, but it was soon ordered to Virginia again. General Nathanael Greene, who was operating farther south, seemed in danger of being crushed between the British forces in Virginia and in North Carolina, where Lord Cornwallis was then commanding. Repeatedly Lafayette urged Washington to permit him to return north to participate in the attack that he momentarily expected would be made on New York, but Washington preferred that he remain in Virginia.

As events turned out, Lafayette won his greatest military glory because of Washington's advice, which never quite took the form of orders. For his own skill in keeping safely out of the way of Cornwallis, who had come to Virginia, and Clinton's orders to Cornwallis to take a position on the coast at Yorktown from which his troops could easily be transported elsewhere made it appear as if Lafayette had forced Cornwallis to retreat before him. And in fact, Cornwallis's position now became so difficult that when Admiral de Grasse, commander of the French West Indies fleet, sailed into the waters around Yorktown, Lafayette with the aid of De Grasse's men and boats was able to bottle up the British. Cornwallis was obliged to surrender when the French-American army under Washington and Rochambeau came up and laid siege to the town. In general orders following the victory, Washington cited Lafayette along with Generals Lincoln and Steuben for his part in the siege and in a subsequent letter to Lafayette spoke warmly of his "military conduct and other important services in the course of the last campaign."[13]

Lafayette shortly returned to France. As his boat left its anchorage in Boston harbor the young devotee bade his paragon farewell (December 23, 1781): "We are going to sail, and my last adieu I must dedicate to my Beloved General. Adieu, my dear General, I know your heart so well that I am sure no distance can alter your attachement [*sic*] to me. With the same candor, I assure you that my love, my respect, my gratitude for you are above expressions, that on the moment of leaving you I more than ever feel the strength of those friendly ties that for ever bind me to you, and that I anticipate the pleasure, the most wished for pleasure to be again with you, and by my zeal and services to gratify the feelings of my respect and affection." To Washington's nephew George Augustine Washington, he wrote (December 22, 1781) to ask for copies "by some sergeant that writes a fair hand" of his letters to the general. "When I grow old," he said, "I will find great satisfaction in reading over our correspondence during last campaign."[14] It is very likely that the letterbook now in the Hubbard Collection is the one that was prepared in answer to this request.

[13]November 15, 1781, *ibid.*, XXIII, 340-42.

[14]Gottschalk, *Lafayette and the close of the American Revolution*, p. 345.

Lafayette played a considerable role in the peace negotiations of 1782-83. The signing of the peace preliminaries found him at Cadiz, second in command of a combined Spanish-French expedition that was intended to carry the war to the West Indies and Canada. Hoping to be the first to convey the news of peace to America, he sent his personal servant on the corvette "Triomphe" with letters to Washington and others. "Were you but such a man as Julius Cæsar or the King of Prussia," he wrote Washington (February 5, 1783), "I should almost be sorry for you at the end of the great tragedy where you are acting such a part. But with my dear General I rejoice at the blessings of a peace where our noble ends have been secured. Remember our Valley Forge times, and from a recollection of past dangers and labours, we still will be more pleased at our present comfortable situation. What a sense of pride and satisfaction I feel when I think of the times that have determined my engaging in the American cause! As for you, my dear General, who truly can say you have done all this, what must your virtuous and good heart feel on the happy instant where the Revolution you have made is now firmly established. I cannot but envy the happiness of my grand children when they will be about celebrating and worshipping your name. To have had one of their ancestors among your soldiers, to know he had the good fortune to be the friend of your heart, will be the eternal honour in which they shall glory."

The end of Lafayette's career in the American Revolution was the beginning of his career in French politics. In the many progressive schemes that he now devised, Washington was somehow always involved—whether it was a plan to emancipate the Negro, to promote commerce between France and the United States, to grant religious toleration to the Protestants, or to spread the gospel of Mesmerism. The friendship of Lafayette and Washington became so well-known in France that his enemies were soon to call him *le Washington français* in derision. Conscientiously the French aristocrat studied his republican model. The imitation consisted not only in minor rules of conduct such as the refusal to accept pay for public services and to avoid hereditary distinctions, but also in Lafayette's conception of his own rôle in French politics. He thought of himself as both his country's liberator from royal tyranny and her defender against "anarchy," and at the same time cherished the ambition to be,

like Washington, a great military leader. The imitation was not purely egocentric, for Lafayette by this time had really acquired liberal ideals that were a consequence of his American experience in general and his devotion to Washington in particular.

Lafayette had hoped to persuade his general to visit Europe, but repeated hints and invitations did not induce Washington to accept. To one invitation, more explicit than the others, the "beloved general" replied: "At length, my dear Marquis, I am become a private citizen on the banks of the Potomac, and under the shadow of my own vine and my own fig-tree, free from the bustle of a camp and the busy scenes of public life, I am solacing myself with those tranquil enjoyments, of which the soldier who is ever in pursuit of fame, the statesman whose wakeful days and sleepless nights are spent in devising schemes to promote the welfare of his own, perhaps the ruin of other countries, as if this globe were insufficient for us all, and the courtier who is always watching the countenance of his prince, in hopes of catching a gracious smile, can have very little conception. I am not only retired from all public employments, but I am retiring within myself; and shall be able to view the solitary walk, and tread the paths of private life with heartfelt satisfaction. Envious of none, I am determined to be pleased with all; and this my dear friend, being the order for my march, I will move gently down the stream of life, until I sleep with my fathers.... I thank you most sincerely, my dear Marqs., for your kind invitation to your house, if I should come to Paris. At present I see but little prospect of such a voyage, the deranged situation of my private concerns, occasioned by an absence of almost nine years, and an entire disregard of all private business during that period, will not only suspend, but put it forever out of my power to gratify this wish. This not being the case with you, come with Madame la Fayette and view me in my domestic walks. I have often told you, and repeat it again, that no man could receive you in them with more friendship and affection than I should do."[15]

From the moment of his return to France, Lafayette had contemplated another visit to America. He had finally made up his mind to go probably before Washington's invitation reached him. On March 9, 1784, he wrote, "I want to tell you that Mde de Lafayette and my three children are well, and that all of us in the family

[15]February 1, 1784, Fitzpatrick, *Writings of Washington*, XXVII, 317-20.

heartly [*sic*] join to present their dutiful affectionate compliments to Mrs. Washington and yourself. Tell her that I hope soon to thank her for a dish of tea at Mount Vernon. Yes, my dear General, before the month of June is over you will see a vessel coming up Pottowmack, and out of that vessel will your friend jump with a panting heart and all the feelings of perfect happiness."

But it was not until August 4, 1784, that Lafayette reached New York. Two weeks elapsed before he got to Mount Vernon, where he spent eleven days, learning to know his general's family and household better and establishing himself in the affection of all of them. Other interests and duties then took him elsewhere, and he did not return to Mount Vernon again until November. Washington went to meet him at Richmond, where the town was kept agog for several days with balls and civic receptions in honor of its two illustrious guests. Traveling together, on November 24 they reached Mount Vernon, where Lafayette stayed only four days. Washington accompanied him as far as Annapolis and put him on the road to Baltimore before he returned home. They parted on December 1, 1784, never to meet again.[16] Washington had guessed that this would be their last meeting. Shortly after he reached Mount Vernon he wrote Lafayette: "In the moment of our separation upon the road as I travelled, and every hour since, I felt all that love, respect and attachment for you, with which length of years, close connexion and your merits have inspired me. I often asked myself, as our carriages distended, whether that was the last sight I ever should have of you? And tho' I wished to say no, my fears answered yes. I called to mind the days of my youth, and found they had long since fled to return no more; that I was now descending the hill I had been 52 years climbing, and that tho' I was blessed with a good constitution, I was of a short lived family and might soon expect to be entombed in the dreary mansions of my fathers. These things darkened the shades and gave a gloom to the picture, consequently to my prospects of seeing you again; but I will not repine, I have had my day."[17]

When Lafayette received this letter he was on board the "Nymphe" in New York harbor, ready to return to France. His

[16] J. Bennett Nolan, *Lafayette in America day by day* (Baltimore, 1934), pp. 217-39; Washington to Knox, December 5, 1784, Fitzpatrick, *Writings of Washington*, XXVIII, 5.

[17] December 8, 1784, Fitzpatrick, *Writings of Washington*, XXVIII, 7.

whole soul, he replied (December 21, 1784), rebelled at the idea that he might not see his "beloved general" again. "Could I harbour it an instant, indeed, my dear general, it would make [me] miserable. I well see you never will go to France. The unexpressible pleasure of embracing you in my house, of well coming [he meant *welcoming*] you in a family where your name is adored, I do not much expect to experience. But to you I shall return, and in the walls of Mount Vernon we shall yet often speack of old times. My firm plan is to visit now and then my friends on this side of the Atlantick, and the most beloved of all friends I ever had, or ever will have any where, is too strong an inducement for me to return to him, not to think that, when ever it is possible, I will renew my so pleasing visits to Mount Vernon. . . . Adieu, adieu, my dear General. It is with an unexpressible pain that I feel I am going to be severed from you by the Atlantick. Every thing that admiration, respect, gratitude, friendship, and filial love can inspire is combined in my affectionate heart to devote me most tenderly to you. In your friendship I find a delight which words cannot express. Adieu, my dear General. It is not without emotion that I write this word—altho' I know I shall soon visit you again. . . . Adieu, adieu."

But, as had so often happened in the past, Washington was right and Lafayette was mistaken. They never saw each other again. The events of the French Revolution soon swallowed up *le Washington français*. His letters became fewer, though sometimes lengthier, because of the tremendous events that Lafayette now had to tell about; and some of those he wrote never were delivered to their destination. No letters have been found for the period from May 25, 1788 to January 12, 1790, though Lafayette assured Washington in his letter of March 17, 1790, that he had written some and they must have been lost. His first letter after that gap gives testimony of his awareness of Washington's influence upon him. "How often, my beloved General, have I wanted your wise advices and friendly support!" When the Bastille was demolished, Lafayette sent one of its keys to Washington. "Give me leave, my dear General," he wrote on March 17, 1790, "to present you with a picture of the Bastille just as it looked a few days after I had ordered its demolition, with the main kea [*sic*] of that fortress of despotism. It is a tribute which I owe as a son to my adoptive father, as an aid de camp to my General, as a

Missionary of Liberty to its Patriarch." It seemed somehow appropriate that the English liberal Thomas Paine was the one to whom the *Washington français* entrusted the delivery to the American patriarch of that "token of victory gained by Liberty over Despotism."[18] Nor did it seem incongruous that Washington should send in return a pair of shoe buckles—"not for the value of the thing, my dear Marquis, but as a memorial and because they are the manufacture of the City [of New York]."[19]

The revolution in France proved harder for Lafayette to manage than Washington had found the American Revolution to be—perhaps because Lafayette was only an imitation of Washington or perhaps because the problems of France were less solvable than those of the United States. Lafayette soon found himself in opposition to the anti-monarchical Jacobins, who eventually became the dominant party in France. When they attacked the Tuileries Palace and deposed Louis XVI, Lafayette determined to flee to America. He did not succeed. He and his party were arrested by the Austrians, with whom France was now at war, and spent the next five years (1792-97) in several prisons in Prussia and Austria.

During that time Washington aided Lafayette generously though with caution. He sent 2310 guilders out of his own pocket to help Mme de Lafayette. He requested Thomas Jefferson as secretary of state to instruct American representatives abroad to make "all prudent efforts" to aid his friend.[20] But Washington could not forget that he was president of the United States as well as the friend of Lafayette, that the United States government was trying to preserve a strict neutrality in the war between the new French Republic and its numerous enemies, and that there was rapidly developing an acute conflict between pro-French and anti-French factions of the American people which he must do nothing to inflame. And so when Mme de Lafayette requested an American mission to demand her husband's release, he felt obliged to reply that such measures were "perhaps not exactly those" which he could adopt nor perhaps the

[18] Washington to Lafayette, August 11, 1790, Fitzpatrick, *Writings of Washington*, XXXI, 85.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 88.

[20] Jefferson to Gouverneur Morris *et al.*, March 15, 1793, quoted in S. F. Bemis, "The United States and Lafayette," *Daughters of the American Revolution Magazine*, LVIII (1924), 408.

ones "most likely under actual circumstances to obtain our object."[21] But he assured her that he was not resting content with "inactive wishes" for Lafayette's liberation. "My affection to his nation and to himself are unabated, and notwithstanding the line of separation which has been unfortunately drawn between them I am confident that both have been led on by a pure love of liberty, and a desire to secure public happiness; and I shall deem that among the most consoling moments of my life which shall see them reunited in the end, as they were in the beginning, of their virtuous enterprise." Probably what Washington meant by implying efforts beyond "inactive wishes" was his part in urging Congress to appropriate a sum of money large enough to provide Lafayette with relief as compensation for his hitherto unaccepted salary as a general officer. Congress did appropriate nearly $25,000 for this purpose.

At about the same time, Washington planned to make a private appeal to King Frederick William II of Prussia for the release of Lafayette on parole. Washington proposed to be careful to stress that he separated himself from his official position in this instance, and acted on an "impulse of friendship" and out of "personal and affectionate anxiety."[22] A cabinet meeting on the subject led to the decision to send such a letter to Berlin by James Marshall, but Marshall was to be instructed not to deliver it unless it seemed likely to meet with a favorable response. Marshall visited Prince Henry, the king's uncle, who was an old acquaintance of Lafayette, but nothing came of his good offices since by that time Emperor Francis II had asked for the transfer of Lafayette to an Austrian jail. Lafayette and his fellow-prisoners were soon on their way to the dungeon at Olmütz.

Shortly afterward, the president's namesake, George Washington Lafayette, succeeded in making his way with a tutor to the United States. Their arrival could not have been more awkwardly timed, for public opinion in the United States was torn by the commercial treaty with England which John Jay had negotiated and which was considered by the pro-French elements of the population as too friendly to England. Washington could not afford to offend France and its American partisans, he felt, by befriending the son of

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 409; Fitzpatrick, *Writings of Washington*, XXXII, p. 390.

[22] Bemis, *loc. cit.*, p. 411; Fitzpatrick, *Writings of Washington*, XXXIII, 242-43, n. 77.

one who had been proscribed by the existing French government. He preferred therefore – perhaps too cautiously – that his namesake should not come to live with him and arranged for him to live in New York incognito under the family name of Motier. Only in April, 1796 (George had arrived in America in August, 1795) did the boy come to Philadelphia to make his home temporarily with his father's beloved friend.

George's pleas[23] and the representations of Dr. Justus Erich Bollmann, who had himself until recently been shut up in an Austrian prison because he had tried to help Lafayette escape from Olmütz, induced Washington to try again to make a personal attempt to obtain his friend's freedom. This time he addressed to the Emperor Francis "a *private* letter," entreating that Lafayette "be permitted to come to this country on such conditions and under such restrictions as your Majesty may think it expedient to prescribe."[24] Whether the letter ever reached the emperor is not clear. It would have made small difference in any case. The negotiations of peace between France and Austria, made possible by the victories of General Napoleon Bonaparte, resulted in the release of Lafayette as well as of his wife and two daughters, who had voluntarily joined him in his prison. The Austrian chancellor took pains to make it clear that the emperor had consented to the release of the prisoners largely because of "the particular interest which the United States appears to attach to it."[25]

For the Lafayettes there followed two years of exile, first in Hamburg, then in Holstein, then in Holland. George returned from Mount Vernon while they still lived in Holstein, and plans were soon afoot for the whole family to go to America and Mount Vernon. Mme de Lafayette's health, ruined by her voluntary imprisonment at Olmütz, did not, however, permit her to travel, and so the family stayed in Europe. It was probably just as well that they did, for to the scruples that had caused Washington to keep aloof from George Washington Lafayette for nearly a year after his arrival in America were now added the complications that resulted from the

[23]George W. Lafayette to Washington, December 25, 1795, Bemis, *loc. cit.* (sequel), p. 485.

[24]May 15, 1796, Fitzpatrick, *Writings of Washington*, XXXV, 45-46; cf. Bemis, *loc. cit.*, p. 487.

[25]Thugut to Buol-Schauenstein, September 13, 1797, Bemis, *loc. cit.*, p. 488.

undeclared war that the United States was then engaged in fighting on the high seas with France. Washington, though no longer president, was nevertheless vitally concerned with public policy. He stated his position frankly to Lafayette in order to impress upon him "the true cause" of his infrequent letters while assuring him that his friendship "had undergone no diminution or change." No one in the United States, he said, would receive Lafayette "with more ardent affection than I should after the differences between this country and France are adjusted and harmony between the nations is again restored. But it would be uncandid and incompatible with that friendship I have always professed for you to say (and on your own account) that I wish it before. For you may be assured, my dear Sir [no longer "my dear Marquis," for the French Revolution had abolished titles], that the scenes you wou'd meet with and the part you wou'd be stimulated to act in case of an open rupture or even if matters should remain in Statu quo, would be such as to place you in a situation in which no address or human prudence could free you from embarrassment. In a word you would lose the confidence of one party or the other, perhaps both, were you here under these circumstances." Washington went on rather testily to explain the conflicts among the American people, announcing that he had again assumed command of the American army to resist the pretensions of France.[26]

Washington never wrote to Lafayette again. Within a year he was dead, and Lafayette had meanwhile returned to a France dominated by Napoleon Bonaparte. Washington's will left to Lafayette "a pair of finely wrought steel pistols, taken from the enemy in the Revolutionary War."[27] The executors of Washington's estate sent them to Lafayette.

Eventually the letters that Lafayette had written to his "beloved general" also found their way into the archives of his château of Lagrange-Bléneau.[28] These letters remained in the Lafayette family until, following the First World War, they were offered privately for sale to Mrs. John Hubbard of New York City. Mrs. Hubbard was kind enough to put them in my care either in the original or in

[26]December 25, 1798, Fitzpatrick, *Writings of Washington*, XXXVII, 64-70.

[27]*Ibid.*, p. 286-87.

[28]Bushrod Washington to Lafayette, January 9, 1817, Hubbard Collection; Lafayette to Sparks, July 25, 1827, Harvard College Library.

microfilm copies for editorial purposes. More recently, Mrs. Hubbard presented the collection to Lafayette College, and Mr. Theodore Norton, librarian of the Van Wickle Library there, has also been most cooperative.

In order to diminish the editorial paraphernalia several procedures have here been used that may appear unorthodox. Proper names, for example, are seldom identified by footnotes. They fall into three categories: those too illustrious to need identification, those too obscure to be identifiable, and those neither too illustrious nor too obscure. Since the third category, for which alone footnotes would be more than ostentatious pedantry, are relatively few, the policy has been adopted of identifying in the "Index" all those identifiable. Frequent reminders to that effect have been scattered throughout the book for any who may overlook this apology.

References have seldom been made to the addresses and outside messages that are on the envelopes of some of these letters, nor to the crossings-out and corrections, sometimes in another hand—possibly that of Jared Sparks, who used and "edited" these manuscripts at the Château Lagrange-Bléneau. Fortunately such "editing" can usually be detected because Lafayette had the habit of crossing out with several strokes or a wavy line whereas the "editor" used a single stroke, leaving the words crossed out quite legible. In every such instance an effort has been made to arrive at Lafayette's original text.

We have tried also to present the errors of punctuation, orthography, grammar and idiom of the original, feeling that the constant improvement of Lafayette's English was not without interest and biographical importance. How easily that information can be lost will readily be obvious to the reader from the few letters (duly noted) that we have been obliged to copy from other printed collections whose editors have "Englished" Lafayette's style.

To have used the usual editorial *sic* for every error by Lafayette would have resulted in more trouble and confusion than helpfulness, and so it has been employed only sparingly. Nor have we tried to reproduce Lafayette's capitalization. In the first place it is not always clear when he meant a letter to be a capital; in the second place there were no rules that he followed about capitalization and the whole question seems to have been meaningless to him. We have on the other hand been careful to reproduce Lafayette's punctuation, be-

cause in that regard, except for the frequent use of dashes for periods, which he, and therefore we, have used interchangeably, he was more careful and regular.

We have also thought it desirable to give Lafayette's signature wherever it appeared, because it changed from time to time—not, as has so often been said, from *La Fayette* to *Lafayette*, for it was always either Lafayette or LaFayette (with no space between *La* and *Fayette)*, but from *Marquis de Lafayette* to *Lafayette*. Often, indeed, in the early letters he used his title but it is now to be found crossed out—whether by himself or some later editor is not clear. In such cases we have not given the title.

Although the majority of the letters in this compilation have been published elsewhere, we have thought it wise to reproduce those that were published along with those that were unpublished, largely for the sake of completeness. It will be found, however, that the earlier publications are in remarkably few instances either complete or accurate. Most of them were based on the copies made by Jared Sparks and now in the Harvard College Library. Sparks's penchant for "improving" the text and for leaving out the parts that seemed to him, for one reason or another, objectionable, affected his own texts as well as those of others who depended upon him. In addition, most of the published letters for the period after 1781 are available only in French translation in Lafayette's *Mémoires*. In every instance that a letter was, so far as our researches could determine, hitherto entirely or largely unpublished, we have indicated that fact in a footnote—usually only by the single word *unpublished*. In every instance that the text was taken from some source other than the Hubbard Collection we have also indicated its source in a footnote. In every instance that the document existed in other than the original form in the Hubbard Collection and the original was available to us, we have borrowed our version from the original, indicating the source of the original likewise in a footnote. Where no indication to the contrary exists, the original forms part of the Hubbard Collection.

A great deal of care has been taken to verify the dates of each of the letters. We have found that Washington, though he may never have told a lie, was rather careless with datings. The dates in his endorsements often differ from those of Lafayette—sometimes because of the lack of clarity of Lafayette's handwriting, but often for

no apparent reason whatsoever. Sometimes, too, Washington in his replies to Lafayette misdated the letters to which he was replying. Other editors of Lafayette's letters have also misdated them occasionally. In all such instances we have taken special pains to verify our datings. The reader who finds a reference elsewhere to a letter of a date not given in this collection will probably find that letter under another date which we considered the correct one.

It remains only to thank those who have helped me with this editorial task. To Mrs. Hubbard my thanks are especially due, for without her generosity this work could never have been prepared or published. To Mr. Edward Larocque Tinker, who first proposed to Mrs. Hubbard that I be permitted to edit her collection and has acted as adviser and advocate in many ways, I am also grateful. To Mr. Tinker, likewise, and to the Marchbanks Press this book owes most of its quality in format and design.

The staffs of the Lafayette College Library, the Library of Congress, the Harvard College Library, the Cornell University Library, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the Huntington Library, and the Morgan Library have been most cooperative. The Social Science Research Committee of the University of Chicago has supported my studies of Lafayette for many years. The investigations required to complete a compilation of this kind would have been impossible without that support. I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to all of these institutions and their staffs.

Mr. Howard A. Vernon, Jr., prepared the manuscript copies of most of the letters and helped to discover which were the unpublished ones. Dr. Frances Acomb prepared the manuscript of many of the letters and likewise helped to discover the unpublished ones; she also helped to check all of them against the originals, microfilms or photostats, prepare the "Table of Contents," and write this "Preface." Miss Margaret Maddox and Mr. Roger Thompson also aided in preparing some of the manuscript. Miss Maddox, Mrs. Marie Rapoport, and my wife, Fruma Gottschalk, have aided me in the arduous tasks of proofreading and preparing the index. Without the loyal assistance of all these people, this work could not have been done in the time it took, and might not have been done at all.

Louis Gottschalk

Chicago, May 20, 1944.