

President Pierce's Ministers at the Court of St. James

Author(s): Theresa A. Donovan

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President Pierce's Ministers at the Court of St. James

DURING the administration of Franklin Pierce, Great Britain was particularly concerned about American plans for expansion. Prior to Pierce's inauguration the London *Times*, the most influential English paper, lamented the end of the Whig administration and the return of the Democratic Party, whose last successful presidential candidate had been James K. Polk, the expansionist. The American Whig Party, not only defeated but destroyed by the election, was memorialized as one which had uniformly professed the greatest moderation and the greatest good will toward England. By their derived name and by their policy, the Whigs connoted a less aggressively nationalistic spirit than the incoming administration of 1853. *The Times* warned that the government across the sea was being transferred to "untried hands."¹

Apprehension about the presidency of General Pierce was based more on his party affiliation than on his personality. A London editorial at election time admitted that the English had not learned much about Pierce's abilities and intentions since his nomination. However, concern about such issues as the tariff and liberty of trade had lessened, for, according to *The Times*, Pierce was known to be favorable to reform.² In diplomatic affairs, *The Times* lacked confidence in the American masses rather than in their chief magistrate: "American people are, no doubt, all-powerful at home but when they proceed to mix in the affairs of other countries, they must be content to recognize and obey those general laws which ought alike to control the excesses of despotism and of freedom." Thus, on the same day that Charles Francis Adams noted in his diary that the Democratic Party was coming into office upon ultra proslavery grounds, *The*

¹ Editorial, *Times*, Jan. 3, 1853.

² *Ibid.*, Nov. 3, 1852.

Times issued a warning that the party held extreme expansionist views.³

The chief instrument of the president for clarifying and propagandizing his policies to foreign as well as to domestic readers was his annual message to Congress. Each year the London press printed the complete text of the document, devoted editorials particularly to the sections on foreign policy, and stressed the paragraphs relating to Anglo-American affairs.⁴ To explain the text of the message to Englishmen and to report on their reaction to Washington was the task of the American minister to the Court of St. James. During Pierce's incumbency three Pennsylvanians in succession represented their government in London.

Joseph Reed Ingersoll of Philadelphia, an interim Whig appointment between the return of Abbott Lawrence to the States in 1852 and the arrival of James Buchanan in 1853, was not called upon by the Democratic administration to announce any change in policy.⁵ His efforts, however, in the promotion of economic ties and in his recognition of America's need of British capital won praise.⁶ Because of his personality, Ingersoll made a most favorable impression,⁷ but privately he forecast the worst in Anglo-American relations under a Democratic regime: "every point of policy will be fiercely inimical to England directly or indirectly. Fisheries, Cuba, Intervention, all mixed up with a good infusion of Anglophobia—are essential points in the present Democratic creed."⁸

By the time of President Pierce's first message James Buchanan was in residence in London. Though he would have preferred to

³ Charles F. Adams Diary, Nov. 3, 1852, Reel 73, Adams Papers, Boston College; Abbott Lawrence, while minister in London, wrote to Amos Lawrence: "The *Times* is so often wrong that I rarely recommend it to any body." Dec. 12, 1851, Amos and William Lawrence Papers, 1846-1852, Box 1, Massachusetts Historical Society (MHS).

⁴ Despite the quip that a man who began reading the President's Annual Message two months previously had not gotten through it, the press each year accented the addresses. *Punch*, XVI (1849), 146.

⁵ Sidney George Fisher asserted that Ingersoll "got thru his mission to England without any discredit" because there were no delicate questions pending. Nicholas B. Wainwright, ed., *A Philadelphia Perspective, The Diary of Sidney George Fisher* (Philadelphia, 1967), 537.

⁶ *Times*, Jan. 6, 8, 10, 12, 1853.

⁷ Buchanan to Marcy, Aug. 24, 1853, John Bassett Moore, ed., *The Works of James Buchanan* (Philadelphia, 1908-1911), IX, 35.

⁸ J. R. Ingersoll to Peter McCall, Oct. 28, 1852, Cadwalader Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP).

serve as secretary of state, the master of Wheatland had finally accepted the ministry. In delaying his decision he made unsuccessful attempts to obtain plenipotentiary powers over negotiations in London of proposed treaties on reciprocity, fisheries, and Central America.⁹ Buchanan, in yielding, was unlike Daniel Webster who as secretary of state had scorned the London appointment that Ingersoll accepted. Webster refused in 1852 not only because he realistically predicted the defeat of the Whigs in the election and the consequent recall of a Whig diplomat but also because he could not envisage himself, after having given diplomatic instructions, now receiving them.¹⁰ Buchanan bowed to the chief executive and Secretary of State William L. Marcy, two men who had been his rivals for the Democratic nomination in 1852. Once Buchanan accepted the post on their terms, he could not have expected that either would give him the chance to initiate any notable settlement that could help him politically. Nevertheless, his next office was to be that of President of the United States.

Despite the gloomy forebodings of both the London press and the retiring Whig minister, Pierce's first message was well received. Diplomatically, the year had been quieter than expected, as Edward Everett, who had represented a Whig administration in London, admitted to Buchanan.¹¹ The new minister himself noted "what is uncommon here," a favorable notice about the message in *The Times*.¹² Though deprived of any role in formulating policy, Buchanan informed Pierce that *The Times* had changed its tone on American affairs since his arrival, and suggested that the *Washington Union*, known to be the Democratic organ, not be so severe in its strictures against England.¹³ A few months later, Buchanan repeated this request, warning that editor John Forney was too belligerent.¹⁴

⁹ Buchanan to Pierce, Apr. 2, 1853, *Buchanan Works*, VIII, 505; June 11, 1853, IX, 1; June 23, 1853, IX, 2; Pierce to Buchanan, June 26, 1853, IX, 6; Buchanan Memorandum on his appointment as minister to England, July 12, 1853, IX, 12-23.

¹⁰ Daniel Webster to Edward Everett, Aug. 14, 1852, Everett Papers, MHS.

¹¹ Everett to Buchanan, Oct. 31, 1853, Buchanan Papers, HSP.

¹² Buchanan to J. T. Mason, Dec. 23, 1853, *Buchanan Works*, IX, 115.

¹³ Buchanan to Pierce, Apr. 7, 1854, *ibid.*, IX, 176.

¹⁴ Buchanan to Pierce, Sept. 1, 1854, *ibid.*, IX, 252. His singling out of the *Union* and its editor for silencing might possibly be explained by his later comment that Forney was openly in favor of the renomination of Gen. Pierce. Buchanan to Harriet Lane, Nov. 16, 1855, *ibid.*, IX, 465.

By the time of the message of 1854, England was engrossed in the Turkish problem. Buchanan, chafing at the government's refusal to entrust him with full power to negotiate Anglo-American difficulties, was disappointed at Pierce's failure to clarify the United States' position on Central American questions:

In England the people know nothing about them. They have some vague idea of the Mosquito question; but no Englishman not in Executive office, with whom I have ever conversed had even heard of the question of "the Bay Islands." The President's message was the only means of communicating this information to the British public; because no other of our public documents is republished in England.¹⁵

Instead of explaining the situation in Central America, Pierce had chided European powers for their concern about American territorial expansion:

It could hardly have been expected that those among them, which have, within a comparatively recent period, subdued and absorbed ancient kingdoms, planted their standards on every continent, and now, possess, or claim the control of, the islands of every Ocean, as their appropriate domain, would look with unfriendly sentiments upon the acquisitions of this country, in every instance honorably obtained.¹⁶

Buchanan had the unpleasant task of upholding the refusal of the United States to aid England in the Crimean struggle. In his message, Pierce informed the warring powers that his country would leave them to adjust their political system in the way they felt best for their common welfare. The seclusion and geographic remoteness of the United States preserved her from any calamitous effects of the war. Meanwhile, the deploying of British Cunard liners from regular commerce to the conveying of troops and equipment enabled Pierce to boast that the United States had reached in foreign commerce a magnitude nearly equal to that of the first maritime power. Aware

¹⁵ Buchanan to Marcy, Dec. 22, 1854, *ibid.*, IX, 288. Great Britain and the United States disagreed about the interpretation of the Clayton-Bulwer treaty of 1850. Washington thought London should no longer retain a protectorate on the coast of Nicaragua, inhabited by the Mosquito Indians. The United States believed also that England should no longer claim sovereignty over the Bay Islands of Honduras.

¹⁶ Annual Message, Dec. 4, 1854, handwritten draft, Franklin Pierce Papers, Library of Congress (LC).

that the American interpretation of neutrality favored Russia, the President vindicated the policy with the reminder that Russia alone had promptly concluded with the United States a convention that accepted the American proposals on the rights of neutral ships. No other power had yet taken any final action on the subject of neutral rights, stated Pierce in his message.

To Lord Clarendon of the Foreign Office, Buchanan privately confided that the true cause for American sympathy with Russia was the belief that England and France were disposed to interfere with the rights of the United States in the Caribbean.¹⁷ By dwelling on *The Times'* exposure of the fiction of Russian-American trade during the war, Buchanan indirectly criticized Marcy for his accenting neutral trade rights rather than rightful expansion. The London press had pointed out that, while the czar had signed the treaty with America so as to obtain timber and ships,¹⁸ as long as England remained master of the sea the Russians would not receive American-built vessels. As for Washington's insistence that Russia would be a customer for American iron products, *The Times* scornfully queried: "When? During wars, when the blockade will keep it out, or after peace, when the English iron will undersell it?" Irritated by American policy at a time when Britain could use an ally, *The Times* referred to the United States as the "thirty Republics, connected by a frail federal organization, and separated by every motive of interest and passion that can agitate and pervert the human mind."¹⁹

Unwittingly, the *New York Times* supported Buchanan in his complaint that the president had not utilized the message as an opportunity to inform the British and possibly gain their support. Editorially, the paper told domestic readers and reprinters abroad that the press understood the unfavorable reaction to part of Pierce's statement:

The remarks upon the "disquieting concern" with which "some European governments" regard the territorial expansion of the United States are especially condemned as an unnecessary, undignified and inexcusable fling at

¹⁷ Buchanan to Marcy, Jan. 19, 1855, *Buchanan Works*, IX, 309.

¹⁸ *Times*, Jan. 12, 1855. The paper pointed to the *New York Herald* as the source of its information.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Jan. 16, 1855.

Great Britain—peculiarly ill-timed in view of the fact that we have labored so hard to avoid all rough corners with the Power when her hands were free, instead of being tied up, as now, in a disastrous war.²⁰

On the other hand, the *Washington Union* refused to acknowledge that Britain's hands were tied by the Crimean conflict:

England may strive to produce the impression that in the struggle in which she is voluntarily engaged she is activated by pure, disinterested, and lofty motives; but she can deceive no one, not even her own citizens. . . . As matters now stand, public sentiment in this country cannot be changed by the insolent threats of English reviewers, or the equally insolent complaints of their echoes on this side of the Atlantic.²¹

Both the English and American presses were too absorbed in the contentious parts of Pierce's message to pay much attention to the formal announcement it contained of an exchange of ratifications on the fisheries treaty. By this measure, according to Queen Victoria in her address at the opening of Parliament, "subjects of long and difficult discussion have been equitably adjusted."²²

Between the time of the annual messages of 1854 and 1855, England underwent a change of ministry from that of Lord Aberdeen to one under Lord Palmerston. During this period there were rumors that Buchanan was to be replaced by Marcy.²³ The Pennsylvanian, however, remained at his London post, reporting that the incoming English Cabinet meant the end of any practical hope of Anglo-American accord in Central America.²⁴ Yet the new ministry did not act hastily. It was not until April, 1855, that Lord Clarendon criticized severely the five-months-old presidential message of 1854, and censured especially the American bombardment of a British pro-

²⁰ *New York Times*, Dec. 7, 1854.

²¹ Editorial, *Washington Union*, Dec. 29, 1854.

²² *Illustrated London News*, Dec. 16, 1854, p. 614.

²³ I. D. Andrews to Caleb Cushing, Dec. 9, 1854, and Samuel Bridge to Cushing, Dec. 23, 1854, Caleb Cushing Papers, Box 71, LC.

²⁴ Buchanan to Marcy, Feb. 16, 1855, *Buchanan Works*, IX, 320. Marcy wrote to Buchanan's successor in London: "Lord Palmerston seems to be beset with more difficulties than he can well master. I shall not mourn his fall—indeed on philanthropic principles I wish it." Marcy to George M. Dallas, May 13, 1856, HM16249, Henry E. Huntington Library. In 1859 Dallas also regretted the change of ministry that returned Palmerston to power after a relatively peaceful interval under Lord Derby. Susan Dallas, ed., *Diary of George Mifflin Dallas While United States Minister to Russia 1837 to 1839 and to England 1856 to 1861*. (Philadelphia, 1892), 317.

tectorate, Greytown, Nicaragua, in retaliation for an insult to the American minister.²⁵

By the time of Pierce's third message in 1855, Palmerston had thoroughly rankled Washington by allegedly promoting through John Crampton, his minister, the recruitment of American citizens for the Crimean War. The president found it difficult to understand how such troops could be recruited without a violation of the law of the land. "Responsible [British] public functionaries" were labeled the originators of the scheme of setting aside depots for recruits. Again the American executive called upon the London ministry to settle without further delay the question of its abandonment of a protectorate over the Mosquito Coast colony in Central America. Further procrastination would seriously endanger the friendly relations which it was "the interest as well as the duty of both countries to cherish and preserve."²⁶

Despite the bellicose tone of the message, the London *Times* assured its readers that President Pierce was not inclined to plunge the Union into war over a "trifle."²⁷ London interpreted the prolonged controversy over the exact meaning of the Clayton-Bulwer treaty relating to the east coast of Central America as an indication that Washington desired to let the discussion drag on interminably until time itself would decide the issue in favor of the United States. On the issue of recruitment in America, *The Times* conceded there had been fault on the part of Britain. Nevertheless, the "wrong" had ceased before any mischief was done. Considering the series of vitriolic editorials that had been exchanged in the previous months by *The Times* and the *Washington Union*, the London organ showed an unusually conciliatory attitude.²⁸ For such mildness on the part of

²⁵ Buchanan to Marcy, Apr. 6, 1855, *Buchanan Works*, IX, 377. The secretary of state had admitted that the attack on the Central American colony in retaliation for an asserted insult to the United States was an embarrassing affair. The United States government intended to stand by the action of the commanding officer, Captain George Hollins. Marcy to Buchanan, Aug. 8, 1854, *ibid.*, IX, 242.

²⁶ J. D. Richardson, ed., *A Compilation of Messages and Papers of the Presidents* (Washington, 1897), VI, 2864.

²⁷ *Times*, Jan. 15, 1856.

²⁸ For examples of the abusive tone, see editorials in the *Times*, Jan. 1, 1855; Oct. 25, 31, 1855; Nov. 1, 1855; and editorials in the *Washington Union*, Nov. 13, 14, 15, 17, 20, 21, 22, 26, 1855; Dec. 4, 8, 1855.

The Times Buchanan claimed credit.²⁹ Marcy was assured that, if *The Times* had opposed the position of the United States, Buchanan would have circulated pamphlets explaining the American position to members of Parliament and to other influential persons. He reported that both *The Times* and the *Daily News* were “on our side” and that a speedy settlement in Central America might have been effected had not Lord Palmerston headed the government.³⁰ Nonetheless, Buchanan, felt the message should have been more forceful, and warned against placing reliance on consistency in the attitude of *The Times*.³¹ Another London paper, the *Daily Telegraph*, had within four days changed from friendship toward the United States to hostility as a result of being “evidently bought over.”³²

Publicity, such as that addressed to the State of the Union message, was accorded but once a year. In February, 1856, Buchanan mourned that he had no access to the public journals so that he could correct erroneous reports about England’s apology for foreign recruitment or to educate the people on Central American issues. When he became an open candidate for the presidency some months later, newspaper coverage was not lacking. British publications assiduously covered presidential campaigns as well as executive policy speeches. When a candidate had been the representative of his country in London, interest was heightened. Also, when his party was that which had troubled Anglo-American accord and the opposing party was that which championed freedom, the press was not inclined to neutrality. Despite his claims of influence over the reporting in *The Times* and his insistence on his personal popularity in London, Buchanan admitted that all the English reviews supported John C. Fremont, his Republican opponent, and were for the “dissolution of the Union.”³³ After the election, he commented that the

²⁹ Buchanan to Marcy, Dec. 18, 1855; Jan. 18, 22, 1856, *Buchanan Works*, IX, 480; X, 9, 12.

³⁰ Jan. 25, 1856, *ibid.*, X, 19.

³¹ Feb. 1, 1856, *ibid.*, X, 27.

³² Jan. 18, 1856, *ibid.*, X, 9.

³³ Buchanan to Marcy, Feb. 5, 1856, *ibid.*, X, 32. In spite of public opposition in London to his candidacy, Buchanan insisted that he had been so popular in England that wherever he appeared at public dinners he was enthusiastically cheered. Buchanan to William B. Reed, Sept. 8, 1856, *ibid.*, X, 91. There was some praise of Buchanan in the English press but hardly such as to encourage him. He was acknowledged as unquestionably a very respectable man, one who could manage affairs in a quiet way if times were quiet.

British press by its violent attacks on him actually served his candidacy well.³⁴ Marcy agreed with this thought:

Fremont was not at all aided but probably damaged by the favours showered upon him by the English press. It would be quite as well if John Bull would forbear to exhibit his guardianship over his dear Cousins. They are of age and like to manage their own affairs, and the advice and admonitions of that old Uncle are not calculated to make their conduct agreeable to him.³⁵

Some of Buchanan's troubles with the English press were caused by republication in *The Times*, and in other London papers, of parts of his despatches to Washington which had been printed by the State Department. Buchanan tried to persuade Lord Clarendon that such extracts were "sheer fabrications," calculated to place the American minister in an unfavorable light for his opinion on the Central American question. Out of context, the quotations gave a false impression of the relations between the two countries and were perhaps the reason for Buchanan's omission from the guest list for Lady Palmerston's first reception of the 1856 season.³⁶ Buchanan had reported to Washington that, had Lord Aberdeen remained in power and Palmerston not been chosen to head the government, the Central American problem would have been satisfactorily adjusted.

Buchanan, one of the ministers who had drawn up the Ostend Manifesto, justifying the seizure of Cuba by the United States if Spain could not maintain order, had good reason to believe that *The Times* would not favor a Democratic candidate for the presidency in 1856. A year before, it had reported hopes of a Whig revival in America³⁷ and had stated that there was reason to believe the recent "pranks" of American diplomatists were occasioned by the amiable weakness of the Democratic president. The lengthy delay in the election of a speaker for the 1855-1856 session of Congress gave *The Times* the opportunity to remind "our American brethren" that

³⁴ Buchanan to Joshua Bates, Nov. 6, 1856, *ibid.*, X, 98.

³⁵ Marcy to George M. Dallas, Nov. 7, 1856, HM16260, Henry E. Huntington Library.

³⁶ Buchanan to Lord Clarendon, Dec. 31, 1855, *Buchanan Works*, IX, 489; Buchanan to Marcy, Feb. 5, 1856, X, 30. Later, Buchanan informed his niece, Harriet Lane, that there had been a favorable change of feeling and that he was somewhat of a lion wherever he went. Buchanan to Harriet Lane, Apr. 29, 1856, X, 65.

³⁷ *Times*, Feb. 14, 1855.

nothing of the kind ever occurred in England.³⁸ To derive benefits from the institutions they had adopted from England, the offspring were cautioned to take along the spirit in which these establishments worked successfully. While criticizing the speakerless Congress, *The Times* took pleasure in its plight. Congressional inactivity prevented anti-British harangues and provided time for the popular excitement over the Crampton recruiting furor (“so sedulously got up against this country”) to subside.³⁹ *The Times* conveniently forgot its former praise of a delay in the organization of the House as beneficial in providing a period for mature deliberation.

Before returning to the United States, Buchanan in the spring of 1856 used his social contacts in London to promote his presidential candidacy. Finding out that he would not be able to meet Nicholas Cardinal Wiseman at formal gatherings, the shrewd politician was able to have an English friend, Sir Emerson Tennent, arrange a dinner at which both the American diplomat and the English prelate were present. There they had ample opportunity to converse.⁴⁰ Later, Thurlow Weed asserted “And that dinner party made Mr. Buchanan President of the United States.”⁴¹ Weed may have exaggerated, but the publicity must have been received favorably by American Roman Catholics, who were still irritated by the British complaints of 1850 about the Pope’s establishment of twelve Roman Catholic episcopal sees in Great Britain.

Although the grace of his niece Harriet Lane had little impact on his presidential campaign, Buchanan could not suffer from the favorable impression she had made upon the London aristocracy, for his countrymen were sensitive about English criticism of Jonathan’s manners.⁴² Fortunately, Nathaniel Hawthorne, then holding a Demo-

³⁸ *Ibid.*, Jan. 14, 1856.

³⁹ Previously, the American correspondent for the *Times* had reported that the delay in the organization of the House would affect beneficially the official language used in the president’s annual message. *Ibid.*, Jan. 3, 1856.

⁴⁰ Wilfred Ward, *The Life and Times of Cardinal Wiseman* (London, 1897), II, 46, 47.

⁴¹ Buchanan’s biographer believed the occasion doubtless had some influence on the election. Philip Klein, *President James Buchanan, A Biography* (University Park, Pa., 1962), 245, 246.

⁴² When she returned to America before her uncle, Buchanan wrote Harriet on Feb. 15, 1856, that he heard “very pretty things” about her at Lord Granville’s dinner. “I know you love praise from the Aristocracy.” *Buchanan Works*, X, 151. When Nathaniel Hawthorne first saw Harriet Lane in England, at a dinner in Liverpool, he thought she probably felt “pretty

cratic patronage position as consul in Liverpool, did not publicize his notebook criticism of Buchanan's knotting a handkerchief, "which ought to have gone in this week's wash," to remind himself of something.⁴³ Nor did Mary Lyell, noted like her husband, the geologist Sir Charles Lyell, as a friend of America, admit to unfriendly critics that she actually did not like to have Buchanan in her drawing room. However, she did confide to William Hickling Prescott, the lionized Boston historian, that people in London complained of the minister's spitting on carpets, a point about which "we in England are absurdly fastidious."⁴⁴

Though the English press feared that Buchanan's election signified America's remaining four more years under a party that favored aggression and annexation, *The Times* held out some hope for better results.⁴⁵ Previously, in welcoming Buchanan as minister to the Court of St. James, the journal had been both congratulatory and cautious, reminding its readers that Buchanan had been secretary of state when the Oregon negotiations were brought to a successful termination.⁴⁶ In 1856, as *The Times* faced the prospect of Buchanan as president, it recalled that Buchanan the diplomat had failed to settle the Central American problems. Yet, with the problems facing America's North and South, the editorial reasoned that Buchanan as president would not uphold the Ostend Manifesto. A foreign war was a contingency that sectionalists were all equally anxious to avoid. The article ended on the diplomatic note that, notwithstanding any reservations the paper might have had concerning Buchanan's principles, *The Times* would treat respectfully the acts of the chief magistrate of "a great, a friendly, and a kindred people."⁴⁷

much" as an earl's daughter would about the merchants' wives and daughters who made up the feminine part of the party. He noted also that her gown was terribly low across the shoulders. Randall Stewart, ed., *The English Notebooks of Nathaniel Hawthorne* (New York, 1941), 100. On a later occasion, a social evening with Buchanan in London, the literary consul thought Miss Lane looked "quite beamingly" and was more sweet and simple in aspect than when he had seen her in "full dress." *Ibid.*, 236.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 234.

⁴⁴ Mary Lyell to Prescott, July 10, 1856, Prescott Papers, MHS.

⁴⁵ *Times*, Nov. 19, 1856.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, May 14, 1853.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Nov. 19, 1856. Buchanan had reported to Pierce in February that Lord Clarendon had never made any direct offer to arbitrate, but he had suggested such a procedure. Roy Franklin Nichols, *Franklin Pierce, Young Hickory of the Granite Hills* (Philadelphia, 1958), 457.

Before making way for Buchanan, President Pierce in his farewell message reported that all major difficulties with Great Britain had been settled.⁴⁸ By this time George Mifflin Dallas of Philadelphia had been in London almost a year. At the time of his appointment to the Court of St. James the previous winter, Dallas realized his tenure might end before summer. Buchanan, too, had feared he might receive his passports in February, 1856, when there were strong reports that British Minister John Crampton would be dismissed from Washington.⁴⁹ When Crampton was finally sent home in June, there actually was no retaliation on Dallas.⁵⁰ Yet even then the Pennsylvanian still was not certain whether he would be simply an interim representative. If the nominee from his home state were successful in the presidential election, he could presume on a longer stay.⁵¹ Buchanan himself had remarked in 1853 that had he not accepted the English mission Dallas would probably have been chosen: "Many friends believed, *not without reason*, that if I should decline the mission, Mr. Dallas would be appointed; and this idea was very distasteful to them, though not to myself."⁵²

During the months when the Philadelphian could expect an order to leave Britain, he was cautious in his public statements and actions. Like Buchanan, he tried to warn Marcy about London reactions. Dallas hoped that Pierce would not announce his final determination against arbitrating the Central American difficulties, a solution Lord Clarendon had suggested to Buchanan.⁵³ The same month in which Parliament and press chafed about the humiliating dismissal of Crampton by the Democratic administration in Washington, Pierce's representative in London provided British public opinion with a scapegoat, himself. He left a court function when his companion, Dennis Mahan, was refused admittance because his costume did not conform to the requirements of court dress. This minor

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 492.

⁴⁹ Buchanan to Harriet Lane, Feb. 8, 1856, *Buchanan Works*, X, 41.

⁵⁰ Dallas in a family letter had said a few days before Crampton's dismissal was known: "It will not surprize me, if I should turn out to be the last Minister from the United States to the British Court, and that will certainly be fame if it be not honor." Dallas to F. E. Dixon, June 6, 1856, Dallas Collection, Library Company of Philadelphia.

⁵¹ George M. Dallas Diary, Nov. 7, 1856, photostatic copy in HSP.

⁵² Memorandum of July 12, 1853, *Buchanan Works*, IX, 23.

⁵³ Dallas to Marcy, Apr. 7, 1856, Dallas Collection.

incident became a topic for ridicule in the press.⁵⁴ Marcy, who had been responsible for American modification of dress at diplomatic functions during Buchanan's term as minister, assured Dallas that the "ridiculous" importance given to the rejection of Mahan was due to the bitterness still remaining from the recruitment controversy.⁵⁵

Though Marcy upheld Dallas, their fellow Democrat Nathaniel Hawthorne did not believe that Dallas made "his point good for having withdrawn with the rejected guest."⁵⁶ Dallas had followed the secretary of state's instructions on costume and his Pennsylvania predecessor's example of "plain clothes" with a dress sword as the American formal dress.⁵⁷ Joshua Bates had located a portrait of George Washington that accorded with this costume,⁵⁸ but the luckless Mahan had omitted the sword. Hawthorne, who did not enjoy the subsequent remarks on American manners in *The Times*, the *Manchester Guardian*, and the ever-vigilant *Punch*, would presumably have agreed more with Charles F. Adams' outlook than with Dallas' scrupulous adherence to Marcy's circular about simplicity in dress. On his appointment to London, Adams reasoned: "I made up my mind that it is no time for indulging oddities of any kind. If gold lace and silk stockings recommend my country through me to the people who have any influence, more than a black coat and pantaloons, I am for the former."⁵⁹ Adams, however, was sent by a Republican administration that was not the initiator of the order concerning court attire.

As for diplomatic problems, Dallas found, like Buchanan, that the British public were not adequately informed by their press about American affairs.⁶⁰ Though his position was insecure while Britain deliberately abstained from sending a replacement for Crampton, he worked throughout the summer and fall of 1856 with Lord Clarendon

⁵⁴ Dallas to M. Morris, June 26, 1856, *ibid.*

⁵⁵ Marcy to Dallas, July 3, 1856, HM16254, Henry E. Huntington Library.

⁵⁶ Stewart, 374.

⁵⁷ Buchanan to Marcy, Feb. 24, 1854, *Buchanan Works*, IX, 157.

⁵⁸ Bates to Buchanan, Jan. 2, 1854, Buchanan Papers, HSP.

⁵⁹ Charles F. Adams Diary, May 15, 1861, Adams Papers, Reel 76. An English editorial asserted that, in the Mahan case, the fact that he was stopped at the entrance saved the "Model Republic" from the embarrassment his amusing appearance would have caused. *Spectator*, XXIX (June 28, 1856), 678.

⁶⁰ Marcy to Dallas, May 23, 1856, Dallas Collection.

over a proposed convention concerning the Central American difficulties. In October, both parties thought they had completed their work.⁶¹ Pierce in his final message hailed the end of the problem. Yet, a month after Buchanan's inauguration, Clarendon was to inform Dallas that the British could not accept all the amendments the American Senate proposed.⁶² Dallas was not to have the satisfaction of completing a treaty that Pierce and Marcy had not allowed Buchanan to negotiate freely.

Dallas' tenuous position during his first year as minister was somewhat like that of Ingersoll, with the difference, however, that Ingersoll represented the party that lost the presidential election—Dallas, the victor. Moreover, Ingersoll served presidents who had no direct previous experience with Anglo-American affairs. Dallas was in 1857 to continue as minister under a president who had, as secretary of state and as minister to the Court of St. James, established personal contacts with cabinet leaders in London. Thus the third Pennsylvanian to represent the United States in the 1850's at Queen Victoria's court could hardly expect to obtain from President James Buchanan plenipotentiary powers in diplomatic affairs.

Boston College

SISTER THERESA A. DONOVAN

⁶¹ Dallas to Gilpin, Oct. 17, 1856, *ibid.*

⁶² Clarendon to Dallas, Apr. 17, 1857, *ibid.*