

16 JEFFERSON AND HIS COLLEAGUES

President's invitation. Jefferson was incensed at their conduct, but put the blame upon Mrs. Merry, whom he characterized privately as a "virago who has already disturbed our harmony extremely."

A brilliant English essayist has observed that a government to secure obedience must first excite reverence. Some such perception, coinciding with native taste, had moved George Washington to assume the trappings of royalty, in order to surround the new presidential office with impressive dignity. Posterity has, accordingly, visualized the first President and Father of his Country as a statuesque figure, posing at formal levees with a long sword in a scabbard of white polished leather, and clothed in black velvet knee-breeches, with yellow gloves and a cocked hat. The third President of the United States harbored no such illusions and affected no such poses. Governments were made by rational beings — "by the consent of the governed," he had written in a memorable document — and rested on no emotional basis. Thomas Jefferson remained Thomas Jefferson after his election to the chief magistracy; and so contemporaries saw him in the President's House, an unimpressive figure clad in "a blue coat, a thick gray-colored hairy waistcoat, with a red underwaist