

dicted to old slippers without heels which, by those who wear them, are said to be comfortable. The state dinners at which "the pêle-mêle system" prevailed also gave great offence. Mrs. Merry on one occasion was allowed to go in to dinner alone. All the foreign representatives were displeased at the absence of common civility as also were their wives. Jefferson wrote an explanation of these social difficulties to Monroe, the American Minister in London. He declared that Mrs. Merry was a "virago" and at this distance of time it is not worth while trying to decide the issue. He was in general an admirer of France and was credited with hatred of England. Towards the close of his life, his opinions underwent a change and we owe to him, in 1823, this prophetic utterance: "Great Britain is the nation which can do us the most harm of any one or all on the earth and with her on our side we need not fear the whole world. With her, then, we should sedulously cherish a cordial friendship, and nothing would tend more to knit our affections than to be fighting once more side by side in the same cause." This, unhappily, was not the spirit which animated him during Mr. Merry's term of office. The latter stuck to his post, but did nothing to check the rising tide of dislike and unfriendliness.

The Erskine episode did not improve matters. The Hon. David M. Erskine, who followed Merry in 1806, was the son of Lord Erskine, the famous lawyer and orator, and afterwards succeeded his father in the title. He possessed ingratiating manners and at once produced a favourable impression. It was his first duty to settle the ill-feeling aroused by the sea-fight between the *Chesapeake* and the *Leopard*. He had been given definite instructions how to act, but unwisely departed from them. This was one of the occasions where the slow communications across the ocean proved a disadvantage. Half a century later, when the "Trent" affair threatened war, delay helped to pre-

serve peace. When the foreign office at last learned of Erskine's error, he was recalled, and Francis James Jackson was sent out in 1809 to replace him. The two countries were steadily drifting towards war and perhaps neither fully realized it. Jackson, as instructed, took a firm line and the Washington authorities proceeded to quarrel with him at once. All concerned seem to have acted with bad temper. The disavowal of the agreement which Erskine had actually signed was annoying to Washington. The American Minister in London had written out prejudicing Jackson's efforts in advance, and he on arrival was not conciliatory. Madison he described as "a plain and rather mean-looking little man, of great simplicity of manners and an inveterate enemy to form and ceremony". Goldwin Smith says he was a "prim mediocrity". The war-hawks were forcing the President's hand, and the British Minister was soon a willing factor in the domestic politics of the United States. Attacked by friends of the Administration, he was given countenance by the Federalists of the North. Dismissed and handed his passports, he went to New York and Boston, where peace counsels prevailed, and was greeted cordially. It was not diplomacy, of course, and the wrong-headedness of everybody at this juncture well illustrates the aphorism of Oxenstiern: "Behold, my son, with how little wisdom the world is governed."

England was at final grips with Napoleon. He had secured the friendship of the young Republic by the cession of Louisiana at a nominal price. Madison's party were keen on a second term and twisting the British lion's tail was a move in the right direction. Augustus John Foster replaced Jackson as British Minister in a vain effort to stave off what had by this time become inevitable. The declaration of war forced him to leave for the British possessions. From Halifax he made a last attempt to stop hostilities by pointing out that the order-in-coun-