

12 JEFFERSON AND HIS COLLEAGUES

almost Yankee-like ingenuity. He writes to his friend Thomas Paine to assure him that the semi-cylindrical form of roof after the De Lorme pattern, which he proposes for the dome, is entirely practicable, for he himself had "used it at home for a dome, being 120° of an oblong octagon." He was characteristically American in his receptivity to new ideas from any source. A chance item about Eli Whitney of New Haven arrests his attention and forthwith he writes to Madison recommending a "Mr. Whitney at Connecticut, a mechanic of the first order of ingenuity, who invented the cotton-gin," and who has recently invented "molds and machines for making all the pieces of his [musket] locks so exactly equal that take one hundred locks to pieces and mingle their parts and the hundred locks may be put together as well by taking the first pieces which come to hand." To Robert Fulton, then laboring to perfect his torpedoes and submarine, Jefferson wrote encouragingly: "I have ever looked to the submarine boat as most to be depended on for attaching them [*i. e.*, torpedoes] . . . I am in hopes it is not to be abandoned as impracticable."

It was not wholly affectation, therefore, when Jefferson wrote, "Nature intended me for the