# Lafayette : the boy general.

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AMERICA'S FOUNDERS

# LAFAYETTE

## *The Boy General*

JOHN P. KAMINSKI

A PARALLEL PRESS CHAPBOOK

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The America's Founders series is dedicated to the several hundred Mentor Teachers who are the heart and soul of the Center for Civic Education's program "We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution."

This chapbook is dedicated to

PETER KAVOURAS
Idaho Department of Education
Boise, Idaho

RICHARD (RIQUE) OCHOA
Alta High School
Sandy, Utah

ROBERT WARMACK
Clear Creek High School
Evergreen, Colorado

## PREFACE

THIS CHAPBOOK IS DEDICATED TO THREE VETERAN teachers from the West: Peter Kavouras, Rique Ochoa, and Bob Warmack. They all share one common trait—a passionate pursuit of knowledge and an enthusiasm to transmit what they've learned to their students. Throughout their cumulative seventy years of teaching, they have taught thousands of students to appreciate their historical heritage and what it means to be a good citizen. As mentor teachers they serve as powerful examples of what dedicated teachers are capable of doing.

Peter is a product of Ohio. He received a bachelor's degree in Political Science and Education from Miami University and a master's degree from Wright State University. For two decades he taught at West Carrollton High School where he received a variety of teaching awards, including the Ohio Social Studies Teacher of the Year in 1996. Peter began mentoring with the Center for Civic Education (CCE) in 1999. He enjoys baseball, sports cards collecting, euchre, Frank Sinatra, and Cream of the West. In 2005 he became the state social science coordinator for the Idaho Department of Education. In my association with Peter at various CCE institutes and at an Idaho state conference in 2005, I have been impressed with Peter's knowledge, his willingness to assist teachers develop their skills, and his genuinely engaging personality.

Rique has taught Advanced Placement history and government for almost thirty years. He coached Alta High School's highly successful debate team for many years, and now coaches soccer. He is a James Madison Fellow and has been a mentor teacher with the CCE for ten years. Because Rique never tires of learning, he often attends summer conferences from which he returns energized. New ideas are regularly incorporated in his classroom presentations. He taught his own two boys (Jeff and Mike), who were enthusiastic students not only in the classroom but at home

as well. Jeff now attends Wake Forest University, thus making his dad an avid Deacons basketball fan. Rique is mild-mannered, gracious, and unassuming. He lives by a strict moral code and is devoted to family—at home, at school, and through the nationwide network of CCE mentors.

Bob Warmack is a legend among CCE mentor teachers. Like Rique, Bob is a James Madison Fellow. Bob loves to use primary sources in his classroom, and has even devised ways to use Thomas Jefferson's "Head and the Heart" letter effectively throughout the semester. Bob's gravelly voice belies the sentimentality that runs to his core. On more than one occasion, I've seen him in an audience listening intently with tears flowing. Bob's passion spills over outside the classroom. He loves the Atlanta Braves, potatoes from the San Luis Valley, and Stevie Nicks. PBR is his preferred refreshment. Virtually everything he consumes is spiced with Tabasco sauce, which Bob assures everyone is a sure cure for any ailment. Before his CCE years, Bob was a die-hard cowboy never out of boots and Wranglers. He is still, perhaps, the most nattily dressed of the mentors. (Only BB from Michigan might challenge Bob for that title.)

These three teachers are what we would wish from all of our teachers. Their enthusiasm is contagious; their dedication inspiring. Their students, students' parents, colleagues, and administrators appreciate what they accomplish every day in the classroom and in the institutes sponsored by the Center for Civic Education. They are at the heart of the CCE mentor network nationwide.

## INTRODUCTION

Thomas Jefferson superficially captured the essence of Lafayette when he described him as having "a canine appetite for popularity and fame."[1] James Madison agreed that Lafayette had "a strong thirst of praise and popularity."[2] While not denying the desire for fame, Lafayette viewed his involvement in America from a more idealistic perspective. While others might worry about Lafayette's unbridled ambition, Jefferson and Madison agreed that this unique Frenchman had the virtue to "get above" his ambition and that many more "favorable traits presented themselves in a stronger light."[3] Madison saw in Lafayette "as sincere an American as any Frenchman can be."[4]

Lafayette was willing to die for his adopted country. He actively sought opportunities to engage the enemy although never at the needless expense of the soldiers under his command. He regularly defended his soldiers' interests, often at the expense of his own fortune, and he instilled in them an *esprit de corps* that made them a formidable fighting force.

Lafayette had a special relationship with George Washington. The commander-in-chief thought of the young Frenchman as a son. Only Alexander Hamilton rivaled Lafayette in Washington's affection. Hamilton, however, always pictured Washington as a stepping stone to power for himself: upon Washington's death, Hamilton lamented that Washington had been "an Aegis [i.e., shield] very essential" for him.[5] Lafayette, however, had a pure

1. To James Madison, Paris, January 30, 1787, Robert A. Rutland et al., eds., *The Papers of James Madison* (Chicago and Charlottesville, Va., 1962–), IX, 250.

2. Madison to Jefferson, Philadelphia, October 17, 1784, ibid., VIII, 119.

3. To Thomas Jefferson, Orange, August 20, 1785, ibid., VIII, 345.

4. To Jefferson, Philadelphia, October 17, 1784, ibid., VIII, 119.

5. Alexander Hamilton to Tobias Lear, New York, January 2, 1800, Harold C. Syrett, ed., *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton* (27 vols., New York, 1961–1987), XXIV, 155.

love and awe for the man he knew held the disunited states together and who kept an outnumbered, ill-fed, sickly, and largely unpaid army in the field for eight long years. Lafayette was unabashed in proclaiming his love for Washington in letter and in person by embracing him—things that other men would never dare to do. Washington kept other men at a distance, but not so with Lafayette.

After the war, Lafayette successfully lobbied in favor of America with the French, Spanish, and German governments. He toured America to universal acclaim in 1784 and again for thirteen months in 1824–1825. He was made a citizen by three states—Connecticut, Maryland, and Virginia. He continued to support America's revolutionary principles in the early stages of the French Revolution, but the unleashed, explosive forces were too powerful for him to control. Exiled from France, he was captured and imprisoned for five years alternately by the Germans and Austrians who fought against Napoleon. Because Lafayette lived and died adhering to the principles that he espoused during America's struggle for independence, he must be considered as one of America's Founders.

## EARLY LIFE

Marie Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert du Motier was born on September 6, 1757, at the family Château de Chavaniac, a stone, fortress-like structure three hundred miles south of Paris in the province of Auvergne. His family was prominent and wealthy with a strong military tradition. It was expected that the boy would become a soldier. On August 1, 1759, when Lafayette was not yet two years old, his father was killed by British cannon fire in the battle of Minden in northern Germany. Lafayette's widowed mother retreated to Paris, and the boy was raised in Auvergne by his liberal and benevolent grandmother and a maiden aunt. Although Gilbert du Motier died valiantly, there were those who claimed he "lost his Life by too much caution to preserve it."[6] No one ever questioned the courage of the son, now the fourth Marquis de Lafayette.

At the age of eleven, Lafayette was brought to Paris where he entered the College du Plessis. His formal education lasted only four years. In the spring of 1770 Lafayette's mother and grandfather died, and the twelve-year-old boy inherited vast estates in Auvergne and Brittany with an annual income of 120,000 livres (about $1.2 million in today's money). The young Lafayette was one of the richest people in France.

As customary among the European aristocracy, marriage was an arrangement between families. Lafayette's uncle and the prestigious Noailles family secretly arranged

6. John Adams's autobiography, L. H. Butterfield, ed., *Diary and Autobiography of John Adams* (4 vols., Cambridge, Mass., 1962), IV, 83–84. Apparently there was some confusion. Lafayette's father did die gallantly at the battle of Minden, while another general was somewhat notorious for caution that cost him his life. How many other Frenchmen and Americans confused the two is uncertain.

that Lafayette and Adrienne de Noailles would marry in a few years. The bride's dowry was settled at 200,000 livres. The families made sure that Lafayette and Adrienne saw each other regularly without, however, revealing to them the secret engagement. Lafayette treated Adrienne kindly but thought of her as a child; Adrienne, on the other hand, immediately fell in love with the dashing handsome teenager who in April 1771 entered the King's Black Musketeers, a mostly ceremonial unit of men selected more for their looks than their combat skills.

In February 1773, Lafayette moved into the Hôtel de Noailles, the family's Paris mansion, and was admitted to the Académie de Versailles, a prestigious school for noblemen, courtiers, and ministers. Two months later Lafayette transferred from the Musketeers to the Noailles Dragoons, a real fighting unit, with the rank of lieutenant. In March 1774, the Noailles family presented Lafayette to court. The youngster was embarrassed by his inability to drink with more experienced officers, and his clumsy dancing caused the beautiful, young princess (soon-to-be queen) Marie Antoinette to laugh. A close friend and schoolmate at the Académie, the Comte de Ségur, described the tall, broad-shouldered Lafayette as "distant . . . with a cold, solemn look—as if he were timid or embarrassed."[7] Lafayette recorded his own shortcomings. "What can I say about my entrance into the world of manners? The favor I enjoyed among the young nobility was short-lived, because of the unfavorable impression created by my silence. I listened and observed but my awkward country manners—and a certain self-respect—made it impossible for me to adopt entirely to the required graces of the court."[8]

A month later, on April 11, 1774, in a small ceremony in the chapel of the Hôtel de Noailles presided over by the

7. Comte Louis-Philippe de Ségur, *Mémoires on souvenirs et anecdotes* (3 vols., Paris, 1824–1826), I, 109, translated and quoted in Harlow Giles Unger, *Lafayette* (Hoboken, N.J., 2002), 14.

8. Unger, *Lafayette,* 14.

archbishop of Paris, Lafayette and Adrienne were married—he was sixteen; she fourteen. Although the wedding was attended by only forty family members, the lavish reception hosted hundreds, including members of the royal family, members of court, and diplomats and aristocrats from throughout Europe.[9] The marriage connected Lafayette with one of the wealthiest and most powerful families in France. As a wedding present, Lafayette was promoted to captain and given the command of a company of dragoons.

Although pleased with the marriage, the Noailles family kept the newlyweds from consummating their vows. After two short affairs with Parisian beauties, Lafayette demanded his marital privileges, and he "never again stopped trying to demonstrate my firm, tender love for the woman I had the good fortune to marry."[10] In December 1775 the Lafayettes had their first child, a girl named Henriette. Two more daughters and a son would follow.

## THE AMERICAN MISSION

In 1775 Lafayette joined his regiment for summer military exercises at Metz in northwestern France. It was at a dinner hosted by Lafayette's commander, the Comte de Broglie, that Lafayette heard the Duke of Gloucester, the younger brother of British King George III, disparage Britain's new imperial policy toward its American colonies. Immediately the young captain's "heart was enlisted."[11]

> Such a glorious cause had never before called the attention of mankind. Oppressors and oppressed would receive a powerful lesson; the great work

9. Unger, *Lafayette*, 13.

10. Unger, *Lafayette*, 15; Stanley J. Idzerda, ed., *Lafayette in the Age of the American Revolution: Selected Letters and Papers, 1776–1790* (5 vols., Ithaca, N.Y., 1977–1983), I, 389. Hereinafter cited as LAAR.

11. Lafayette's Memoirs, 1779, LAAR, I, 7.

> would be accomplished or the rights of humanity would fall beneath its ruin. The destiny of France and that of her rival [Britain] would be decided at the same moment. . . . I gave my heart to the Americans and thought of nothing else but raising my banner and adding my colors to theirs.[12]

Lafayette recognized the opportunity for personal glory that would come at the expense of the hated British who had killed his father and had humiliated France with the harsh Treaty of Paris of 1763 that ended the Seven Years' War and forced France to cede Canada to Britain. Lafayette later explained to John Adams, "As to My Going to America, I first Went for the Revolution, and not for the war, and warfaring was truly A Secondary Incident, which in Support of the Rights of Mankind Had Become Necessary."[13] "It was the final struggle of liberty, and its defeat would have left it neither asylum nor hope."[14]

While Lafayette prepared for his departure to America dramatic events unfolded. In April 1776 the French government started to provide secret aid to the Americans. In July the Second Continental Congress unanimously declared American independence from Great Britain. News then arrived in France of the humiliating retreat of American Commander-in-Chief George Washington. With an army of 19,000, Washington had been defeated on Long Island, he had abandoned New York City without a shot, and had ignominiously retreated from one British attack after another westward through New Jersey and across the Delaware River into Pennsylvania. His army had disintegrated to fewer than 2,000 men and boys. Thoroughly disenchanted with the Fabian tactics of their commander,[15] various

12. Lafayette's Memoirs, quoted in Unger, *Lafayette*, 15.

13. Paris, April 9, 1784, LAAR, V, 213–14.

14. Lafayette's Memoirs, ibid., I, 7.

15. The Roman general and statesman Fabius defeated Hannibal in the Second Punic War by a cautious strategy of delay and avoidance of direct conflict with the enemy whenever undermanned.

members of Congress sought to replace Washington. One plan called for the appointment of a French commander, who with a core of veteran French officers would take over the American army. French Foreign Minister Vergennes secretly plotted with the Comte de Broglie, Lafayette's commanding officer, to lead the French officers' takeover in America. Lafayette's intention to join the American forces presented both opportunities and dangers to de Broglie's ambitious plans. After having little success in discouraging Lafayette, de Broglie tried to use Lafayette to his advantage. In November 1776 de Broglie introduced Lafayette to his trusted aide, Baron Johann de Kalb, a Prussian-born soldier of fortune. De Kalb was not really a baron; he had annointed himself with that title when he joined the French army. He had been to America to reconnoiter the military situation. Fluent in English, he served as interpreter and adviser to the youthful, inexperienced Lafayette.

On December 7, 1776, Lafayette met with Silas Deane, an American commissioner in Paris who was soliciting aid from anywhere and anyone. Deane had already promised numerous Frenchmen commissions in the American army. Because most of these French officers proved to be inept, Deane's appointments lost credibility with both Washington and Congress. Deane understood, however, that the inexperienced but charismatic Lafayette might prove useful to the American cause. He promised the nineteen-year-old French captain a commission as a major general in the American army. Lafayette would be outranked only by Washington, who was a lieutenant general, and a handful of more senior major generals. Deane justified commissioning a boy who could not speak English and had not yet fired a shot in battle by declaring that Lafayette's "high Birth, his Alliances, the great Dignities which his Family holds at this Court, his considerable Estates in this Realm, his personal merit, his Reputation, his Disinterestedness, and above all his Zeal for the Liberty of our Provinces"

made him a valuable appointment. "To gain a most Gallant & Amiable Young Nobleman, to espouse Our Cause, and to give to the World a Specimen of his Native & hereditary bravery, surely cannot be deemed Criminal."[16] Lafayette agreed "to serve the United States with all possible Zeal, without any Pension or particular allowance, reserving to myself the Liberty of returning to Europe when my Family or my King shall recall me."[17]

## ESCAPING FRANCE

As Lafayette secretly prepared for his departure, he agreed to visit his father-in-law's uncle, the Marquis de Noailles, who had just become French minister to Great Britain. Lafayette loved London. He attended the opera and danced through the night at one ball after another. He enjoyed dancing more in Britain "because my dancing is more on a par with everyone else's."[18] However, leaving the dinner table at 7:30 and then having supper between 2:00 and 3:00 A.M. struck him "as a very bad practice."[19] While hiding his intentions to take up arms with the Americans, Lafayette rejoiced at the news of Washington's victory at Trenton. He overtly and zealously defended the American position to such an extent that, when he abruptly left Britain, he was "Considered there as an Enthusiastic Rebel, and Indeed a Young Madman."[20]

Before visiting London, Lafayette had purchased a 220-ton ship for 112,000 livres. *La Bonne Mère*, a merchantman in the American trade, would be refitted in Bordeaux and,

16. Deane to Joseph-Matthias Gérard de Rayneval, Paris, April 2, 1777, LAAR, I, 41.

17. Agreement between Lafayette and Silas Deane, Paris, December 7, 1776, LAAR, I, 17.

18. Lafayette to Adrienne Lafayette, London, February 25 and 28, 1777, LAAR, I, 22, 23.

19. Ibid., Calais, February 20, 1777, LAAR, I, 23–26.

20. Lafayette to Robert R. Livingston, Cadiz, February 5, 1783, LAAR, V, 89.

armed with two small cannon and a few muskets, would transport Lafayette, de Kalb, and a dozen other French officers to America. While in London Lafayette wrote his father-in-law of his intentions. Knowing that the duc d'Ayen would be thoroughly "astonished," Lafayette explained that this was "a unique opportunity to distinguish myself, and to learn my profession." He was committed to fight France's old enemy to obtain American independence. He would leave London and go directly to the ship he had purchased and sail for America without seeing his wife and daughter.[21]

The response to Lafayette's plans to fight in America varied. The duc d'Ayen was outraged; Lafayette's mother-in-law was distressed; his wife was saddened but strangely stoical. Unless he returned to Paris immediately, the duke threatened to keep Lafayette away from his wife and daughter for at least a year. His brother-in-law, the Vicomte de Noailles, begged Lafayette "to abandon the wild Enterprise." Government officials expressed shock and criticized Lafayette for his imprudence. Foreign Minister Vergennes "said that for a Young man of the first fashion, with every advantage of Fortune, and Situation, to engage in such an Adventure as this, was such unaccountable Folly, as there was no foreseeing, no guarding against."[22] The King "expressed his displeasure in the strongest Terms, and said it was highly blameable, in a Man of M. de la Fayette's Fashion, and Rank to go and assist *Rebels*."[23] The people of Paris and of all France were ecstatic. This handsome young soldier was defending the honor of his country.

When Lafayette returned from Britain he secluded himself at de Kalb's house on the outskirts of Paris for three days (March 13–16). Word finally arrived that Lafayette's

21. To the duc d'Ayen, London, March 9, 1777, LAAR, I, 28.

22. Lord Stormont to Lord Weymouth, Paris, April 2, 1777, LAAR, I, 42.

23. Lord Stormont to Lord Weymouth, Paris, April 9, 1777, LAAR, I, 44.

ship—renamed *La Victoire*—was ready to sail from Bordeaux, about one hundred miles north of the Spanish border. When Lafayette and de Kalb left for Bordeaux, French troops were on their heels carrying a *lettre de cachet,* a peremptory arrest warrant, stating that "You are forbidden to go to the American continent, under penalty of disobedience, and enjoined to go to Marseilles to await further orders." On March 25, *La Victoire* sailed south and three days later docked in Pasajes, the first small port just across the Spanish border. The *lettre de cachet* was delivered to Lafayette on March 31. Uncertain about the consequences of disobeying the King's direct orders, and worried that Deane and de Broglie might be held responsible for his actions, Lafayette left the ship and returned to Bordeaux where he reported to the port commandant and sent a courier with a letter to Prime Minister Maurepas requesting permission to go to America and taking full responsibility for his actions.[24] Lord Stormont, the British minister to France, reveled. Lafayette's "Expedition has been a short one indeed. . . . the French King's Order to return to France, which was so peremptory, that He could not but Obey."[25] But when the courier returned without a response, Lafayette took the silence as "tacit consent."[26] De Kalb explained Lafayette's thinking. "The Marquis guessing, by all the letters he received, that the Ministers granted and issued orders to stop his sailing, out of mere compliance with the requests of M. Le Duc d'Ayens, and that in reality neither the King nor any body else could be angry with him, for so noble an Enterprise."[27] Lafayette set off for Marseilles with a military escort to make sure that he returned. Along the way he stopped to wait for the latest mail from Paris.

24. Lafayette's Memoirs, 1779, LAAR, I, 9.

25. Lord Stormont to Lord Weymouth, Paris, April 9, 1777, LAAR, I, 45.

26. Lafayette's Memoirs, 1779, LAAR, I, 9.

27. De Kalb to Deane, On board *La Victoire*, April 17, 1777, LAAR, I, 46.

At an advantageous time, disguised as a courier, he galloped off to Spain. When the soldiers realized that Lafayette had disappeared, they pursued him, but, with the aid of an innkeeper's daughter in Saint Jean du Luz, Lafayette escaped capture. He reached *La Victoire* on April 17 and three days later set sail for America. In a letter to William Carmichael, Deane's secretary, Lafayette wrote that "on the whole, this affair has produced all the éclat I desired, and now that everyone's eyes are on us, I shall try to be worthy of that celebrity. I can assure you that I shall not be taken by the English." Lafayette told Carmichael not to worry about his family affairs or about Lafayette's refusal to obey the King's orders. "Once I have departed, everyone will agree with me; once I am victorious, everyone will applaud my enterprise." Failure was not a possibility. "I shall become a good general as readily as I have become a good American."[28] In a last letter to his wife before sailing, Lafayette wrote that "having to choose between the slavery that everyone believes he has the right to impose upon me, and liberty, which called me to glory, I departed. . . . Tomorrow is the moment of cruel departure."[29]

The voyage to America took almost eight weeks. As was typical in uneventful crossings, "one day follows another here, and, what is worse, they are all alike. Always the sky, always the water, and again the next day the same thing."[30] The voyage was filled with the usual sea sickness, boredom, monotonous diet, and fear—fear of the weather, of privateers, and of the British navy. With only two small (and as it turned out) defective cannon, the sluggish *Victoire* did "not have the strength to defend itself."[31] The few muskets obtained were largely meant to protect the French officers from a potentially mutinous crew while on board ship. If captured by the British, the French officers,

28. On board *La Victoire*, April 19, 1777, LAAR, I, 50.
29. On board *La Victoire*, April 19, 1777, LAAR, I, 47, 49.
30. Lafayette to Adrienne Lafayette, May 30, 1777, LAAR, I, 57.
31. Ibid.

including Lafayette, would be thrown into British prisons with no expectation of diplomatic intervention from Vergennes to gain their release. Except for the initial sea sickness, Lafayette remained healthy throughout the voyage. He divided his time "between military books and English books." He made progress in the language; which, he said, "will soon be so necessary."[32]

The French officers were enthusiastic about their departure from France and looked forward to their service in the American army. One young officer, the Vicomte de Mauroy, a French lieutenant colonel, took a personal interest in Lafayette. "His youth, that ardent desire to distinguish himself, his name, his fortune, the pleasures that he had sacrificed to glory, his constancy in fighting against all obstacles, and the good luck he had met with in surmounting all of them made me very interested in his success."[33]

After recovering from a "few weeks" of severe sea sickness, a homesick Lafayette wrote Adrienne. He despised "this cruel separation" from his pregnant wife and "leaving everything that is most dear to me." He tried to assure her that she had nothing to fear—that he would return safely. "The post of general officer has always been regarded as a warrant for long life."[34] After landing, he again reassured her. He retained his full faith in his lucky star. "That star has already served me in a manner that astonished everyone here; have a little trust in it, my dear, and it will surely put you entirely at ease."[35]

Lafayette's lucky star saved the whole enterprise. About one hundred miles from the coast, they were approached by a naval vessel. The French soldiers "made a show of resistance," but fortunately it was an American warship. The sluggish *Victoire* was unable to keep pace with the speedier ship, and when it was scarcely out of sight, the

32. Ibid., June 7, 1777, p. 59.
33. Vicomte de Mauroy, Memoir, LAAR, I, 53.
34. May 30, 1777, LAAR, I, 56, 57.
35. Charleston, S.C., June 19, 1777, LAAR, I, 60.

American vessel encountered two English frigates. Expecting that Charleston would be heavily patrolled by British blockaders, the Frenchmen skirted the "coast that swarmed with enemy vessels" and, after tacking "back and forth all day and all night," finally anchored on June 13 near North Island in Georgetown Bay.[36]

## ON AMERICAN SOIL

At 2:00 P.M. on June 13 seven sailors rowed *La Victoire's* jolly boat with Lafayette and four other French officers on board in search of someone who could help them reach Charleston. As Lafayette set foot on American soil, "his first words were an oath to conquer or to perish in that cause."[37] Not until 10:00 P.M. did the newcomers come across a group of slaves combing for oysters. The slaves brought the French officers to the manor house of Major Benjamin Huger, a prominent South Carolina rice planter. Huger welcomed the Frenchmen into his house and the next day procured a pilot to steer *La Victoire* to Charleston. Lafayette returned to *La Victoire* at noon on June 14 with news that two British frigates patrolled Charleston harbor. Half the soldiers decided to stay on board the ship. Lafayette ordered the captain to burn the ship if capture seemed imminent. Lafayette, de Kalb, six other officers, and two servants chose the safer though more arduous seventy-five-mile trek to Charleston through scorching sand, dismal swamp, and impenetrable woods, all the way fighting off pesky gnats whose bites produced boils all over the body.[38]

Lafayette's party reached Charleston in three days "looking very much like beggars and brigands." Accustomed to disreputable French adventurers with forged letters of

36. Lafayette's Memoirs, 1779, LAAR, I, 10; Lafayette to Adrienne Lafayette, Charleston, June 19, 1777, LAAR, I, 60; and Du Rousseau de Fayolle's Journal, LAAR, I, 68.

37. Lafayette, Memoirs, LAAR, I, 10.

38. Du Rousseau de Fayolle's Journal, LAAR, I, 68.

introduction, the locals in Charleston treated Lafayette's sorrowful-looking group with scorn. On June 17 a squall forced the two British frigates out to sea long enough for *La Victoire* to enter Charleston harbor safely the next day and validate Lafayette's story. Scorn immediately changed to hospitality.

Lafayette's men spent eight pleasant days in Charleston before starting off on their 900-mile overland odyssey to Philadelphia. Three of the officers decided to risk travel by sea. The other officers divided into two groups and set off on their journey. Soon their carriages and wagons splintered, their horses died, and they ran out of money. "We were forced to leave part of our baggage behind, and part of it was stolen. We traveled a great part of the way on foot, often sleeping in the woods, starving, prostrated by the heat, and some of us suffered from fever and dysentery." At last, after thirty-two grueling days, they "arrived in Philadelphia in a much more pitiful condition than that in which we entered Charleston." Their "only solace was the . . . pleasant expectation of the reception we would receive. . . . We were all animated by the same spirit. Lafayette's enthusiasm would have sustained anyone who had less than he."[39]

## A COOL RECEPTION

Lafayette's party arrived in Philadelphia on the morning of July 27, 1777. "After cleaning ourselves up a bit," the party presented its papers to President of Congress John Hancock. Hancock sent the Frenchmen to Robert Morris, who told them to meet him the next morning at the door of the Pennsylvania State House where Congress assembled. When the Frenchmen arrived punctually, they "had to wait a very long time." Finally, Morris appeared with James Lovell, chairman of the Committee on Foreign

39. Chevalier Dubuysson's Memoir, LAAR, I, 76–77.

Applications. Fluent in French, Lovell alone would deal with the Frenchmen—not in the chambers of Congress; not even in a private committee meeting room, but right there on the street. After haranguing the officers as adventurers, Lovell asked them if they had seen Deane's instructions. Lovell said, we authorized him to send us four French engineers. He has sent us none. We asked Benjamin Franklin to send us engineers, which he did. Now French army officers were coming to Congress incessantly. "Last year we did lack officers, but this year we have plenty, and all of them are experienced."

Lafayette and his compatriots were devastated. Before officially protesting, they sought out the reasons for such an affront. Congress had had its fill of French adventurers. Most were ill qualified, and those who were qualified were intriguers. Lafayette's party sent a memorial to Congress denying that they were adventurers, detailing the expenses and hardships they had suffered to join the American cause, and asking that they be given commissions or be repaid for their expenses and sent back to France.[40] Lafayette himself sent a note requesting Congress to reconsider. "After the sacrifices I have made, I have the right to exact two favors: one is to serve at my own expense, and the other is to begin to serve as a volunteer."[41]

Lovell and William Duer called on Lafayette. After some negotiations it was decided that Lafayette would receive an honorary commission as a major general dated from that very day (not from the date of Deane's commission). He would receive no pay or pension, would have no command, and would never ask for a command. When Lafayette agreed to these conditions, Congress sent him the sash of a major general and a commission dated July 31. After Lafayette's exhilaration subsided, he realized that

40. This account of Congress's reception of Lafayette and his fellow officers is taken from the Chevalier Dubuysson's Memoir, LAAR, I, 77–79.

41. Lafayette's Memoirs, LAAR, I, 11.

nothing had been done for his fellow officers. He intervened on their behalf, but Congress made only an allowance of 18,000 livres in American paper money to pay for their expenses. On August 15 Congress provided funds for their return to France.[42]

## IN THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF'S FAMILY

Immediately upon obtaining his commission, Lafayette properly equipped himself. He bought a carriage, horses, and a new wardrobe. He hired the two youngest French officers as his aides. Writing his first letter in imperfect English, Lafayette eloquently thanked Congress for his commission.

> The feelings of my heart, long before it became my duty, engaged me in the love of the American cause. I not only consider'd it as the cause of Honor, Virtue, and universal Happiness, but felt myself empressed with the warmest affection for a Nation who exhibited by their resistance so fine an example of Justice and Courage to the Universe. . . . I schall neglect nothing on my part to justify the confidence which the Congress of the United States has been pleased to repose in me. As my highest ambition has ever been to do every thing only for the best of the cause in which I am engaged, I wish to serve near the person of General Washington till such time as he may think proper to entrust me with a division of the Army.[43]

Lafayette concluded, writing as an American, by pleading for commissions for his French fellow officers.

42. Congress changed its position on de Kalb and commissioned him a major general on September 15, 1777.

43. To President of Congress John Hancock, Philadelphia, August 13, 1777, LAAR, I, 103.

The reference to a division to be commanded by Lafayette surprised Hancock and Congress. It would not be the only time that Lafayette would request a command or be somewhat disingenuous. On various occasions he would write things from different perspectives hoping to achieve what he ultimately wanted.

The question now was where to place Lafayette. The expectation was that he would be in America for a short time. He should not be placed in a life-threatening situation, yet he should be allowed to attain the glory that he desperately desired. He would then return to France a hero and serve the American cause at Versailles. Silas Deane had explained to President Hancock Lafayette's importance. "His family are of the first influence here, and have, for ages, been celebrated in the affairs of this Country, as well in peace as war. His fortune puts him above all pecuniary considerations, and he desires none, but wishes to rank with Gentlemen of the first character in the Army."[44] Henry Laurens, a South Carolina delegate to Congress and soon to succeed Hancock as president of Congress, wrote that "This illustrious Stranger whose address & manner bespeak his birth will have a Short Campaign & then probably return to France & Secure to us the powerful Interest of his high & extensive connections."[45] Virginia delegate to Congress Richard Henry Lee described Lafayette as a curiosity.

> I saw the young Marquis de la Fayette, a Nobleman of the first fortune and family in France, the favorite of Court and Country. He left behind him a most beautiful young wife, and all the soft enjoyments that such a situation, with an immense fortune in a polished Country can furnish to fight in the

44. Paris, ca. March 16, 1777, LAAR, I, 33.

45. To John Lewis Gervais, Philadelphia, August 5, 1777, Paul H. Smith, ed., *Letters of Delegates to Congress, 1774–1789* (26 vols., Washington, D.C. 1976–2000), VII, 421–22.

> American wilderness for American Liberty! . . . He is thirsty for glory but the Commissioners at Paris wish the General [i.e., George Washington] may restrain the ardor of youth and not suffer his exposure but on some signal occasion. He is sensible, polite, and good natured.[46]

It was a particularly dangerous time for America. British General John Burgoyne was in upstate New York marching south from Canada to separate New England from the rest of the country. Lt. Colonel Barry St. Leger was in western New York marching eastward with Iroquois allies to meet up with Burgoyne. The British in New York City under Henry Clinton would soon attempt to assist Burgoyne, while General William Howe took an army into Delaware Bay and threatened to capture Philadelphia. Washington rushed to Philadelphia to assess the situation and meet with Congress. It was on August 5 at a dinner party held by Congress for the General and his aides that Lafayette and Washington met for the first time. From a distance Lafayette could easily identify the General. "Although he was surrounded by officers and private citizens, it was impossible not to recognize the majesty of his face and his countenance. The affable and noble manners and the dignity with which he addressed those about him were equally distinguished."[47]

> When they were about to separate, Washington took Lafayette aside, spoke to him very kindly, complimented him upon the noble spirit he had shown and the sacrifices he had made in favor of the American cause, and then told him, that he should be pleased if he would make the quarters of the Commander-in-chief his home, establish

46. To Langdon Carter (?), Philadelphia, August 19, 1777, Smith, *Letters,* VII, 514.

47. Lafayette's Memoirs, quoted in Unger, *Lafayette,* 39.

> himself there whenever he thought proper, and consider himself at all times as one of his family; adding, in a tone of pleasantry, that he could not promise him the luxuries of a court, or even the conveniences, which his former habits might have rendered essential to his comfort, but, since he had become an American soldier, he would doubtless contrive to accommodate himself to the character he had assumed, and submit with a good grace to the customs, manners, and privations of a republican army.[48]

Lafayette immediately joined Washington's household. While on a tour inspecting the fortifications protecting Philadelphia, Washington said to his other generals: "We should be embarrassed to show ourselves to an officer who has just left the French army." Lafayette responded, "I am here to learn, and not to teach."[49] Not the response Washington had anticipated from the young Frenchman.

Soon Washington was in a quandary. It was his understanding that he was to protect Lafayette from danger and that Lafayette had agreed never to ask for a command of his own. Now, however, Lafayette started asking when he would receive his first command.

> If I understand *him*, that he does not conceive his Commission is merely honorary; but given with a view to command a division of this Army. True, he has said that he is young, & inexperienced, but at the same time has always accompanied it with a hint, that so soon as *I* shall think *him* fit for the Command of a division, he shall be ready to enter upon the duties of it; & in the mean time, has offer'd his service for a smaller Command, to which

48. Lafayette's reminiscences to Jared Sparks in 1828, LAAR, I, 100–101.

49. Lafayette's Memoirs, LAAR, I, 90.

> I may add, that he has actually applied to me (by direction he says from Mr. Hancock) for Commissions for his Two Aid de Camps.

What Congress intended and what Washington was supposed to do to comply with Congress's wishes he knew "no more than the Child unborn."[50]

Rather than addressing Congress officially, Washington waited until Lafayette was out of camp and then wrote Benjamin Harrison, a Virginia delegate to Congress. He pleaded with Harrison, "give me the sentiments of Congress on this matter, that I may endeavour, as far as it is in my power, to comply with them." He told Harrison that he would check directly with Hancock with respect to commissions for Lafayette's aides.[51]

An astonished Harrison immediately responded. "I remember well a Conversation's passing between you and I on the subject of the Marquis de la Fayette's Commission, & that I told you it was merely Honorary. In this light I look'd on it, and so did every other member of Congress." Lafayette had agreed to forgo the commission offered by Deane and had accepted the terms presented by Congressman Duer. Duer had assured Congress that Lafayette

> did not wish or desire Command, but gave us to understand his chief motive for going into our Service was to be near you, to see Service, and to give him an Eclat at home, where he expected he would soon return. These you may depend on it were the Reasons that induced Congress to Comply with his request, and that he could not have obtain'd the Commission, on any other terms; the other Day he surprised every body by a letter of his,

50. Washington to Benjamin Harrison, Neshamony Bridge, Pa., August 19, 1777, LAAR, I, 104–5.

51. Ibid.

> requesting Commissions for his officers, and Insinuating at the same time that he should expect a Command as soon as you should think him fit for one. Depend on it Congress never meant that he should have one, nor will not countenance him in his applications.[52]

## AN EXCELLENT BIT OF GOOD FORTUNE

When Admiral Richard Howe's fleet of 260 warships and transports carrying an attack force of 18,000 men left Delaware Bay, Congress and the residents of Philadelphia breathed a sigh of relief. Charleston, it seemed, was Howe's likely destination. But when word arrived that the British fleet had been seen heading north in Chesapeake Bay, it was obvious that Philadelphia was indeed the likely target. General William Howe, the admiral's brother, would land his army at Head of Elk and march the fifty miles overland to the rebel capital. Washington and his generals held a council of war, the first Lafayette attended. He did not speak but signed the minutes with the other major generals. Washington readied his army to meet the British. On August 24, with fifes and drums, the army paraded through the streets of Philadelphia. Washington looked all the part of the commander-in-chief, leading the way with his brilliantly attired French protégé at his side.

Washington positioned his army along the northern bank of Brandywine Creek, the last natural barrier obstructing Howe's advance on Philadelphia. On September 11 the armies engaged. After several hours' combat, the American right was outflanked and the British and German mercenaries steadily advanced. Lafayette stood near Washington and pleaded to join in the battle. Busy with positioning his troops, Washington allowed the eager Frenchman to

52. Benjamin Harrison to George Washington, Philadelphia, August 20, 1777, LAAR, I, 105–6.

join the fray. Several American units held firm; Lafayette joined one. First staying on horseback, galloping back and forth rallying the men to hold their ground, Lafayette then dismounted as the men started to retreat. Entering their ranks he ordered them to attach their bayonets. But Americans were not yet accustomed to this kind of hand-to-hand combat. It was at this point that Lafayette was shot in the left thigh by a musket ball. He kept admonishing the men until the enemy was almost upon them. With the assistance of his aide de camp, Lafayette mounted his horse and rode off with his boot overflowing with blood. Near Chester, Pa., Lafayette blocked a bridge to halt a disorderly rout. He ordered the soldiers to form orderly lines before allowing them to cross. At this time Washington and the other generals arrived. Weakened from loss of blood, Lafayette's wound was treated by Dr. John Cochran, Washington's personal physician,[53] and once again Lafayette barely escaped being captured. Captain James Monroe assisted Lafayette to Birmingham Church. The next day he was transported by boat to Philadelphia.

De Kalb called the wound "an excellent bit of good fortune," because it established Lafayette's bravery and his dedication to the American cause. The Prussian was proud to be Lafayette's friend. "No one," de Kalb wrote, "is more deserving than he of the consideration he enjoys here. He is a prodigy for his age; he is the model of valor, intelligence, judgment, good conduct, generosity, and zeal for the cause of liberty for this continent. His wound is heal-

53. On several other occasions Dr. Cochran cared for a fevered Lafayette. While in France in June 1779, Lafayette wrote to Cochran expressing his gratitude and "affection for the Good Doctor Bones. That Name I shall ever give you." As a token of his affection, Lafayette sent Cochran a watch with George Washington's picture in the case. "As during my fit of illness the watch I had then was of great use to you for feeling the pulse, I thought such a one might be Convenient, . . . and I beg leave to present you with. I did fancy that adorning it with my heroic friend's picture would make it acceptable." Lafayette to Cochran, St. Jean d'Angely, Near Rochefort, June 10, 1779, LAAR, III, 271.

ing very well."[54] Lightheartedly, Lafayette referred to "cleverly" leaving "a little bit of my leg" behind at Brandywine. By early November he was nearly completely recovered "although I still limp a bit; but in a few days it will no longer be noticeable, or at least not very much."[55]

The day after the battle, Lafayette wrote Adrienne of the wound. Fearing she might hear some exaggerated version about the battle and her husband's wound or even his death, he wrote that it was not that serious:

> I shall begin by telling you that I am well, because I must end by telling you that we fought in earnest yesterday, and we were not the victors. Our Americans, after holding firm for a considerable time, were finally routed. While I was trying to rally them, the English honored me with a musket shot, which wounded me slightly in the leg, but the wound is nothing, dear heart; the ball hit neither bone nor nerve, and all I have to do for it to heal is to lie on my back for a while—which puts me in very bad humor.[56]

On September 18, the day before the British occupied Philadelphia, Lafayette was moved to Bristol; three days later he was moved again to the Moravian community of Bethlehem where he spent the next four weeks recuperating. On October 1 Lafayette again wrote Adrienne telling her not to worry.

> Do not be concerned, dear heart, about the care of my wound. All the physicians in America are paying close attention to me. I have a friend who has spoken to them in such a way that I can be

54. To Pierre de Saint-Paul, With the American Army, November 7, 1777, LAAR, I, 146.

55. Lafayette to Adrienne Lafayette, Whitemarsh Camp, November 6, 1777, LAAR, I, 143.

56. Philadelphia, September 12, 1777, LAAR, I, 108, 109.

assured of the best care. That friend is General Washington. This estimable man, whom I at first admired for his talents and qualities and whom I have come to venerate as I know him better, has become my intimate friend. His affectionate interest in me soon won my heart. I am a member of his household and we live together like two brothers in mutual intimacy and confidence. This close friendship makes me as happy as I could possibly be in this country. When he sent his chief surgeon to care for me, he told him to care for me as though I were his son, for he loved me in the same way.[57]

## BACK WITH THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

Lafayette was eager to return to active duty. When Washington heard that Lafayette "wished to rejoin the army quickly," he wrote "a very fond letter, urging me to take care of my health first."[58] Lafayette again talked of obtaining a command. He told Washington that he had refused a division command initially "because I was diffident of my being able to conduct it without Knowing the character of the men who would be under me. Now that I am better acquainted no difficulty comes from me. Therefore I am ready to do all what your excellency will think proper." If he were in France, Lafayette told Washington, he would by now surely have command of a division. All of this was told to Washington, not as commander-in-chief, "but to my father and friend." Lafayette told Washington that he would never write Congress. Although he admired individual delegates to Congress, such as Richard Henry Lee and Henry Laurens, he felt that Congress had "not behave[d] with me with that frankness which is the proof of an honest mind." He asked Washington to keep the contents of this letter "under the

57. Bethlehem, October 1, 1777, LAAR, I, 116.
58. Ibid.

most intimate secret, and confidence"[59] —a pattern Lafayette would regularly follow.

Washington was again perplexed. He explained his dilemma to Congress.

> I feel myself in a delicate situation with respect to the Marquis La Fayette. He is extremely solicitous of having a Command equal to his Rank, & professes very different Ideas as to the purposes of his appointment, from those Congress mentioned to me. He certainly did not understand them. I do not know in what light they will view the matter, but it appears to me, from a consideration of his illustrious and important connections—the attachment which he has manifested to our cause, and the consequences, which his return in disgust might produce, that it will be adviseable to gratify him in his wishes. . . . Besides he is sensible—discreet in his manners—has made great proficiency in our Language, and from the disposition he discovered at the Battle of Brandy Wine, possesses a large share of bravery and Military ardor.[60]

On October 18, Lafayette wrote South Carolina delegate to Congress Henry Laurens—the two having become excellent friends—that he was at the end of his "tedious confinement. My wound (tho' the skin is not yet quite over) seems to me in so fine a way of recovery that I judge myself able to play my part in our first engagement."[61] Isolated in the hospital and worried that he would miss an opportunity for glory, Lafayette bought a horse and on October 19 reported to Washington's headquarters at Whitemarsh, Pa., about a dozen miles northwest of Philadelphia.

59. Bethlehem, October 14, 1777, LAAR, I, 122–23.

60. Washington to the President of Congress, White Marsh Headquarters, November 1, 1777, LAAR, I, 140–41.

61. Bethlehem, LAAR, I, 124–25.

## THE FIRST SKIRMISH

With the British occupying both New York City and Philadelphia and having complete mastery of the sea, it looked as if their plan of dividing America was working. Washington feared that the British forces in New York City and Philadelphia would join together and divide the states in half. He desperately wanted information on British movements in the area, and he wanted to assist the isolated American forts along the Delaware River that still held out against the encircling British and Hessians. On November 20, Washington ordered Major General Nathanael Greene, perhaps the ablest of the American generals, to cross the Delaware with two thousand men to assist any American posts and to return with valuable information. Lafayette pleaded to go along. Greene did not object. He rather liked the young Frenchman, especially after the courage he had shown at Brandywine. Greene wrote to his wife that Lafayette "has left a young wife and a fine fortune . . . to come and engage in the cause of liberty. This is a noble enthusiasm. He is a most sweet-temperd young gentleman."[62]

At first Greene kept his forces together, but, hoping to gather more information, he gave Lafayette the command of about 350 men—ten light horse, 150 riflemen, and the balance Pennsylvania and New Jersey militiamen. After reconnoitering for almost two days, Lafayette spotted a detachment of about 400 Hessians with field pieces guarding a bridge across a creek about a half hour's march from Gloucester. The Hessians were about two and a half miles from the main British encampment. Getting dangerously close to the Hessians, Lafayette himself assessed the enemy's strength and sent a courier to Greene giving him the information gathered so far and informing him that

62. Fort Lanes End near Bristol, Pa., November 20, 1777, Richard K. Showman et al., eds., *The Papers of Nathanael Greene* (13 vols., Chapel Hill, N.C., 1976–2005), II, 200.

he was going to attack imminently. Lafayette ordered the attack on November 25 at 4:00 P.M. The surprised Germans fled to within a half mile of the main British camp before General Cornwallis came up with grenadiers to save them from capture. Twice the British infantry were beaten back. Darkness allowed Cornwallis, who thought he was facing Greene's entire detachment, to cross the creek. During the night Greene's forces joined Lafayette's. Greene chose not to pursue the British the next day, and returned to headquarters. Lafayette had led his first command. Twenty enemy were killed, twenty wounded, and another twenty captured. The Americans suffered five wounded and one killed.

The day after the skirmish, Lafayette wrote to Washington to explain what had happened. He praised his men. "I never saw men so merry, so spirited, so desirous to go on to the enemy what ever forces they could have as that little party was in this little fight. I found the riflemen above even their reputation and the militia above all expectations I could have. I returned to them my very sincere thanks this morning."[63] On November 29 Lafayette wrote to the militia commanders that "The Genl. [Washington] is very sensible of their bravery and alacrity in having attacked and repulsed with a great Loss an Enemy much superior in number and Force."[64] Washington was obviously pleased. Perhaps Lafayette should be given a command.

On November 26 Washington again raised the issue of a command for Lafayette in a letter to Henry Laurens, newly elected president of Congress. "There are now some vacant Divisions in the Army, to one of which he may be appointed, if it should be the pleasure of Congress. I am convinced he possesses a large share of that Military ardor

63. Haddonfield, N.J., November 26, 1777, LAAR, I, 156–57.

64. Philander D. Chase et al., eds., *The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series* (Charlottesville, Va., 2002), XII, 419n.

which generally characterizes the Nobility of his Country." Washington quoted from a letter he had just received from General Greene describing the skirmish. Greene concluded, "The Marquis is determined to be in the way of danger."[65] Congressman James Lovell wrote, "I wish more were so determined,"[66] while his New York colleague William Duer believed that Lafayette would "make a good officer."[67]

Congress ordered Washington's letter and Greene's extract published in the newspapers. It then resolved that Washington "be informed, it is highly agreeable to Congress that the Marquis de la Fayette be appointed to the command of a division in the continental army."[68] When Lafayette returned from New Jersey, Washington asked him "to choose from several brigades the division that would suit me best. I have taken one composed entirely of Virginians."[69] Washington made the announcement in the general orders for December 4. Lafayette thanked Congress for the appointment and wished "to deserve it by my own and my division's conduct."[70]

## THE DIVISION COMMANDER

With the war slowing down for the winter, Lafayette had time to think about how to handle himself when men's lives were at stake. Writing his old French mentor, Lafayette said that "Once I set foot in the American camp, I gave up

65. Washington to Laurens, Headquarters, November 26, 1777, LAAR, I, 158–59.

66. Lovell to John Adams, York, Pa., December 1, 1777, Smith, *Letters,* VIII, 363.

67. Duer to James Wilson, York, Pa., November 30, 1777, ibid., 345.

68. Worthington C. Ford et al., eds., *Journals of the Continental Congress,* 1774–1789 (34 vols., Washington, D.C., 1904–1937), December 1, 1777, IX, 982–83.

69. Lafayette to the duc d'Ayen, In camp at Gulph in Pennsylvania, December 16, 1777, LAAR, I, 193.

70. Lafayette to Henry Laurens, At the Gulph, December 14, 1777, LAAR, I, 184.

bookish studies. Forgetting belles-lettres, I attempted to educate myself in a cruel and barbarous art. I am so possessed by the dæmon of war that I have totally abandoned myself to military occupations. Finally, having renounced the gentle company of women, verse, and the Muses, I now find pleasure in the horrible voluptuousness of Bellona."[71] For the first time since leaving France, he wrote to his father-in-law. "I read, I study, I examine, I listen, I think, and out of all of that I try to form an opinion into which I cram as much common sense as possible. I shall not talk very much for fear of saying something stupid; for I am not disposed to abuse the confidence that the Americans have deigned to show me."[72] But Lafayette was not afraid to suggest his ideas—expeditions against the the West Indies, Canada, Philadelphia, and his real hope, the recapture of New York City. Any expedition that would benefit France—that could pull France into the war—would benefit America. He knew, however, that he had to restrain his ambition. "I do not think that a thirst for glory permits us to hazard the well-being of an army, or even a part of it, which is neither ready nor designed for an offensive. . . . given the forces we have, we must rely upon a purely defensive plan except for those times when we are forced into an action."[73] He explained to members of Congress why it would be imprudent to attempt to drive the British out of Philadelphia. "I am sorry my conscience obliges me to have an opinion which is so much against my inclination. . . . I came here to fight, fighting is the most pleasant occupation I can wish, and I shall be the happiest man when I shall believe it can be attended with any advantage for America."[74]

71. To L'Abbé Fayon, Valley Forge, April 13, 1778, LAAR, II, 24. Bellona was the goddess of war.

72. Lafayette to the duc d'Ayen, In camp at Gulph in Pennsylvania, December 16, 1777, LAAR, I, 194.

73. Ibid.

74. Lafayette to Robert Morris, at headquarters, January 9, 1778, LAAR, I, 229.

At a time when intrigues against Washington in the army and in Congress were rife, Lafayette realized that everything depended on Washington remaining commander-in-chief.

> Our general is a man truly made for this revolution, which could not succeed without him. I am closer to him than anyone else, and I find him worthy of his country's veneration. His warm friendship and his complete confidence in me regarding all military and political matters, great and small, put me in a position to know all that he has to do, to reconcile, and to overcome. I admire him more each day for the beauty of his character and his spirit.[75]

To Washington Lafayette wrote, "I am now fixed to your fate and I shall follow it and sustain it as well by my sword as by all means in my power."[76] Washington appreciated Lafayette's "friendship and attachment." He felt, since their first acquaintance, the same "sentiments of the purest affection."[77]

To Adrienne he wrote why he could not come home just yet. We "Frenchmen have always made it a point of honor not to depart before the conclusion of a campaign. This one has not ended."[78] At one point, only the Hudson River separated the two great armies. Now they were much more distant. The American army would winter in Valley Forge "in little huts that are no more pleasant than a dungeon." "Honor," he told Adrienne, "has told me to remain. . . . the situation of the army, of my friend who commands

75. Lafayette to the duc d'Ayen, In camp at Gulph in Pennsylvania, December 16, 1777, LAAR, I, 192.

76. Camp, December 30, 1777, LAAR, I, 206.

77. Washington to Lafayette, Headquarters, December 31, 1777, LAAR, I, 207.

78. Valley Forge, January 6, 1778, LAAR, I, 223.

it, and of the whole American cause, you will pardon me, dear heart, you will even excuse me, and I almost dare to say you will approve."[79] Furthermore, "General Washington will be truly unhappy if I speak to him of leaving. His confidence in me is greater than my age allows me to admit. In his position, he is surrounded by flatterers and secret enemies. He finds in me a trustworthy friend to whom he can open his heart, and who always tells him the truth. Not a day passes that he does not have long conversations with me or write me long letters, and he likes to consult me about the most important matters. . . . this is not the moment to speak of leaving."[80]

In mid-December, Washington moved his headquarters ten miles west to a sloping plateau called Valley Forge. The winter was particularly cold and Quartermaster General Thomas Mifflin did little to alleviate the situation. Lafayette described the hardships. "The soldiers lived in misery; they lacked for clothes, hats, shirts, shoes; their legs and feet black from frostbite—we often had to amputate. . . . The army often went whole days without provisions, and the patient endurance of soldiers and officers was a miracle which each moment served to renew."[81] Lafayette used his own money to buy food and clothing for his men. He became known as "the soldier's friend." The suffering would continue into March, when Nathanael Greene, the new quartermaster general, and the moderating temperatures of the approaching spring brought relief.

On January 22, 1778, Congress resolved to invade Canada. Devised by Washington's opponents, the mission was at first to be commanded by General Thomas Conway, an Irishman who had served in the French army before enlisting in the American continental forces. Horatio Gates, president of the Board of War and victor over Burgoyne at Saratoga, hoped to replace Washington as commander-

79. Ibid.
80. Ibid.
81. Ibid.

in-chief. Conway, Gates's co-conspirator, was to be named commander-in-chief of the Northern Army. Conway's French army connection was expected to rally French Canadians to oust the British from Canada. This offensive-minded strategy would show the inadequacy of Washington's Fabian defensive tactics. Washington's supporters in Congress, however, named Lafayette as "a fiter person" for the job of leading the "Canadian irruption."[82]

Lafayette hastened to York, Pa., where Congress and the Board of War sat. He eagerly accepted the command, acknowledging that "I am young, I am therefore unexperienced, but every mean in my power, every knowledge in the military way I can have granted to me, all my exertions, and the last drop of my blood, shall be employed in showing my acknowledgement for such a favor and how I wish to deserve it." Before accepting the command, Lafayette "required detailed orders" spelling out what was expected and what means would be made available. Lafayette rejected the title of commander-in-chief of the Northern army, which would have meant that he would report directly to the Board of War. Instead, Lafayette wished to remain subordinate to Washington.[83] He vehemently objected to two of his subordinate officers—Thomas Conway and William Duer. Of Conway, Lafayette wrote "Amongs[t] all the men who could be sent under me Mr. Connway is the most disagreeable to me and the most prejudiciable to the cause."[84] Duer, Lafayette wrote, "has the reputation in the country to be a tory, and you'l know by several instances that he is a rascall."[85]

Lafayette outlined the qualities he admired in a subordinate officer.

82. Nathanael Greene to Henry Knox, Valley Forge, February 26, 1778, *Greene Papers,* II, 294.

83. Lafayette's Memoirs, LAAR, I, 245; and Lafayette to President of Congress Henry Laurens, Valley Forge, January 26, 1778, LAAR, I, 253–54.

84. Ibid., LAAR, I, 254.

85. Ibid., January 27, 1788, LAAR, I, 260.

> I want, Sir, to have with me men who [are] hearty for the cause, respected by their virtue, candid in their advices, punctual in the execution of our projects, quiet by their temper and moderate in their discourses, as well as their actions, could engage the confidence of the people, give good examples to the officers, help the young commander in chief both by wise and sincere advices and by true exertions for the common cause, who in case I was killed could take immediately my place.[86]

Lafayette suggested General Alexander McDougall of New York and General de Kalb as ideal subordinates. McDougal, "a man of real virtue," by "the coldness of his age will calm the ardor of my twenty years." (McDougall was forty-six.) Lafayette wanted "men whom I can extract from, as much prudence and as many years (without any sensible injury to their persons) as I believe there is necessary to fill up in my age." Even if a man were "born with those so superior and uncommon talents for the great art of war, the best age for his generalship, after a continued study and experience is between forty and fifty."[87] It was important that the second in command should be an American because "being amongs Canadians I schall be obliged to *francise* myself, and speak much about *the french blood* to gain their hearts. I wish'd to have with me a man of a great judgment, and ardent lover of his country to prevent the ideas of diffidence which are unhappily so frequent among a free people."[88] Gouverneur Morris wrote "I am deeply surprised at the mature Judgment & solid Understanding of this *Young* Man for such he certainly is."[89]

On February 17, Lafayette arrived in Albany, the rendezvous point for the assault, and to his astonishment

86. Ibid., January 26, 1778, LAAR, I, 255.

87. Ibid., January 27, 1778, LAAR, I, 259.

88. Ibid., January 26, 1778, LAAR, I, 255.

89. Morris to Henry Laurens, Camp, January 26, 1778, Papers of the Continental Congress, Item 78, Vol. 15, 295, National Archives.

found that fewer than 1,200 of the promised 2,500 soldiers had assembled. Provisions needed for the campaign—food, clothing, stores, sleighs, and snowshoes—had not been procured. Those troops assembled had not been paid for past services. General John Stark, third in command, had done nothing to raise his contingent of New Hampshire militiamen. Lafayette wrote to Laurens to "let him know which hell of blunders, madness, and deception I am involved in."[90] By the time that men and materiel could be assembled, it would be too late—Lake Champlain would not be passable on sleighs and would not yet be navigable. No route for retreat would be available for several months. All general officers in Albany agreed that the campaign should be abandoned.

Lafayette felt that abandonment of the expedition would tarnish his reputation. The campaign was no secret—Congress had advertised the fact that the young Frenchman was about to liberate French Canada. Lafayette bemoaned his situation to George Washington. "I am sure I will become very ridiculous and laughed at. . . . I confess, my dear general, that I find myself of very quick feelings whenever my reputation and glory are concerned in anything."[91] Lafayette received official notice from Congress that "the Canadian irruption" had been cancelled, yet that "Congress maintain an high opinion of your Excellency as a Soldier & a Gentleman."[92] Congress instructed the Board of War to tell Lafayette "that Congress entertain a high sense of his prudence, activity and zeal."[93] New York Governor George Clinton advised Lafayette not to worry what "the Fools & the Mad [might] say concerning the Northern Expedition. . . . the Sober & Wise . . . fully approve your Conduct on the Occasion."[94] Laurens attempted to assure

90. Albany, February 19, 1778, LAAR, I, 295.

91. Albany, February 23, 1778, LAAR, I, 321.

92. President of Congress Henry Laurens to Lafayette, York, Pa., March 4, 1778, LAAR, I, 332.

93. Resolution of Congress, March 2, 1778, LAAR, I, 334n.

94. Poughkeepsie, March 8, 1778, LAAR, I, 341.

Lafayette that no one blamed him for the cancellation. Quite the contrary. The remarks "of a sensible candid Man" illustrated how most people viewed Lafayette's decision. "I was averse to this Irruption into Canada not because I thought badly of the scheme but because I feared the Marquis being a Young Man full of Fire would have impetuously rushed our soldiers into too much danger. But his present conduct convinces me he is wise & discreet as well as brave. I now esteem him a worthy valuable Officer." "Once more," Laurens wrote, "be assured you have gained great reputation in this Country & that there is not the smallest ground for your apprehensions of the contrary."[95]

Being the ranking active-duty officer in the North, Congress appointed Lafayette the commander of the Northern Army stationed in Albany. He took the opportunity to train the anarchic 1,200 soldiers on duty when he had arrived for the Canadian irruption. He organized them into troops of sixty men each, practiced drilling, purchased clothing for them with his own money, and paid them with funds earmarked for the Canadian expedition. He disbursed these troops throughout the region thereby reducing the frequency of Indian raids. Out of the limelight of higher-ranking officers, Lafayette learned how to command a small army. Using information from spies and British deserters, Lafayette reported that he had suppressed an uprising—one that was probably only imaginary. He trekked forty miles with Philip Schuyler to meet with over five hundred Iroquois in an attempt to convince them to abandon the British and ally with the Americans. Although they were impressed with Kayewla, the name of an ancient legendary warrior that they gave to Lafayette, only the Oneidas and the Tuscarawas, "our only true friends" remained loyal to America. The Oneidas asked that a fort be built for them, which Lafayette had constructed. But garrison duty did not satisfy Lafayette—he wanted to be where there was activity—he wanted to be back in General

95. York, Pa., March 6, 1778, LAAR, I, 336.

Washington's camp. On March 13 Congress resolved that Lafayette return to camp and resume the command of a division in the army. Seventeen days later Lafayette received the order to return; he left the next day.

## HONING HIS SKILLS

By April 10 Lafayette was back at Valley Forge. Conditions had changed dramatically. The army now numbered approximately 18,000, and Quartermaster General Nathanael Greene had done a much better job in keeping the soldiers provisioned. Without much military activity, Lafayette continued to read English works to improve his language skills. At Washington's suggestion, Lafayette created a special hand-picked division of 2,200 men and five artillery pieces. He also expected about fifty Oneida volunteers to join him soon. While awaiting orders, Lafayette wrote his wife that "everything here is in a state of deep repose, and we wait impatiently for the opening of the campaign to rouse us from our torpor."[96]

Washington asked his generals for their opinions on three strategies: attacking New York City, attacking Philadelphia, and staying in a fortified camp. Not knowing the situation around New York, Lafayette felt that it was "very improper [for him] to speak." Although he liked the idea of attacking Philadelphia, he knew that it would be costly in lives. Large armies attacking fortified positions always seemed to be "very Romantic." He preferred a more practical approach. "As the cause of America is not a trifling one we must not play an uncertain Game." One-third of the army should always be "in motion upon the flanks of the enemy, to intercept his convoys, give frequent alerts to him, prevent him from taking any rest, and take all the opportunities offered to them. The other two-thirds would be always compact, always upon the defensive. I *mean a defensive of marches and planned operations*—for with the

96. Valley Forge, April 14, 1778, LAAR, II, 29.

double of the forces of the ennemy we schould be able to attak him were proper opportunities offered to us."[97] Lafayette believed that "Immortality schall attend the respectable leaders whose virtue and talents have stood in the most dangerous crisis's and obtained at last the end they were fighting for, the happiness and liberty of their Grateful citizens. I glorify myself to have been the witness of this ever famous revolution."[98] Washington accepted the unanimous advice of his council "to remain on the defensive and wait events."

Word arrived in camp on April 30 that France and America had signed treaties of commerce and alliance. Lafayette was delighted. He contemplated leaving the American army and fighting with French forces in the West Indies.

Activity was evident among the British forces in Philadelphia. General Howe was about ready to retire as commander-in-chief and return to Great Britain to be replaced by General Sir Henry Clinton. The British decided that it would be wise to evacuate Philadelphia before a French fleet arrived in Delaware Bay to prevent a seaward withdrawal.

Sensing the British activity, Washington ordered Lafayette to reconnoiter the enemy and obtain "intelligence of their motions and designs." It was important, through the use of "trusty and intelligent spies," to ascertain if the enemy was evacuating Philadelphia and what their final destination might be. Washington reminded Lafayette that "your detachment is a very valuable one, and that any accident happening to it would be a severe blow to this army. You will therefore use every possible precaution for its security, and to guard against a surprise. No attempt should be made nor any thing risked without the greatest prospect of success, and with every reasonable

97. Lafayette to Washington, Valley Forge, April 25, 1778, LAAR, II, 35–39.

98. To Henry Laurens, Valley Forge, May 1, 1778, LAAR, II, 40.

advantage on your side."[99]

Lafayette's detachment left camp on May 18, crossed the Schuykill River, and took up a good position on Barren Hill, a craggy outcropping about halfway between Philadelphia and Valley Forge where several important roads came together. Lafayette strategically placed his men while reconnaissance reported that the British were celebrating the retirement of Howe. One of Lafayette's spies lost his nerve and informed Howe of Lafayette's whereabouts. On the night of May 19, the British sent out over eight thousand troops—all of the men fit to march—and fifteen cannon in a three-pincer movement to encircle the unwary youth. So confident was Howe of victory, that he prepared accommodations for Lafayette on the frigate taking him back to England. He also made plans to march the captured Americans to New York City, welcomed his brother Admiral Howe and General Henry Clinton to observe the attack, and invited the ladies of Philadelphia as guests to dine with the boy general that evening.

Early in the morning on May 20, two captured British grenadiers divulged the British plan. Lafayette quickly prepared for the attack. He had previously located a small, isolated road that went from the top of the bluff down to the Schuykill. He sent crack snipers and his Oneida warriors into the woods to fire at the British and draw attention. As soon as they fired they ran off to a new location and fired again, repeating the process over and over again. To the British, it looked as if Lafayette's entire force was bottled up in the woods. In reality most of the Americans were well on their way down the small road to the river crossing, all out of sight of the enemy. Lafayette kept order among his retreating men, formed a rear guard that protected the withdrawal of the snipers from the woods, and was with the last of the squads to leave the field of battle. Lafayette positioned his troops on the opposite side of the

99. Washington to Lafayette, Headquarters, May 18, 1778, LAAR, II, 53–54.

Schuykill awaiting the next assault. The British, confused and actually firing on each other, finally realized that Lafayette had escaped. They returned to Philadelphia without their young dinner guest. Lafayette's detachment suffered seven casualties, while the British lost about thirty men. Lafayette re-crossed the Schuykill and continued reconnaissance for three more days before returning to camp.

President of Congress Henry Laurens wrote Lafayette congratulating him "most heartily on the late honorable Retreat which is Spoke of by every body here in the highest terms of applause." The word was that "The Marquis de Lafayette has acquired new Glory by this great Act of Generalship."[100] Lafayette had "gained more applause for his Generalship in the late Retreat than would have been bestowed upon a slight victory."[101] Lafayette responded by praising his officers and men. "With such officers and men as I had that day, I schall willingly meet the best english troops upon equal terms. There was already spent among them a pride, a confidence and *esprit de corps* as could distinguish the best part of a veteran army."[102]

When the British began their evacuation from Philadelphia to New York, Washington had to decide how to react. Half of his generals wanted to send a detachment of 1,500 men to harass the rear elements of the 1,500 wagons that stretched out for twelve miles. The other half (including Lafayette) wanted to send a larger force of at least 2,500 men to harass and attack if the opportunity allowed. On June 24, Lafayette wrote to Washington that allowing the British to march unchallenged across New Jersey would be dishonorable. "In a word I think the measure [of attacking] consistent with Prudence, military principles, with the honor of the American army and every one

100. York, Pa., May 29, 1778, LAAR, II, 60.

101. Henry Laurens to Cornelius Harnett, York, Pa., May 30, 1778, Smith, *Letters,* IX, 774.

102. To Henry Laurens, Valley Forge, June 1, 1778, LAAR, II, 64.

in it."[103] The next day, Washington ordered Lafayette with a command of four thousand to engage "the enemy's left flank and rear, and giving them every degree of annoyance. . . . and if a proper opening should be given by operating against them with the whole force of your command."[104] Lafayette eagerly set out to catch up with "our red friends" in the slow-moving wagon train.[105]

General Charles Lee, second in command to Washington, had opposed a large-scale attack on the British. When offered the command of such a force, he rejected it. As Lafayette positioned for the attack, Lee changed his mind and pleaded with Washington to set Lafayette aside and assign the command to him. Lafayette had already told Washington in person and in writing that he would "chearfully obey and serve" under Lee if he changed his mind and wanted to command.[106] Lee took command and immediately waffled by sending different units in different directions. Seeing the developing chaos, Lafayette sent for Washington, who arrived "at a gallop, [and] found the troops in confusion and retreating." Washington ordered Lee to the rear, assessed the disastrous situation unfolding, positioned about eight hundred men and some cannon strategically with Lafayette in command. Washington then rallied the other men and changed the entire course of the battle. The conflict ended at nightfall, when the British withdrew and continued their march northward. Those at the Battle of Monmouth recognized the true greatness of Washington. Lafayette wrote "During this whole business, . . . General Washington seemed to arrest

103. Hopewell, N.J., June 24, 1778, LAAR, II, 85–86.

104. Kingston, June 25, 1778, LAAR, II, 87.

105. "Our red friends" refers to the British. Lafayette to William Carmichael, Corryels Ferry, June 22, 1778, LAAR, II, 83. At various times Lafayette referred to the British soldiers as "my british friends," "redbirds," and "our neighbors," when the two armies were in close proximity.

106. Lafayette to Washington, Hice Town, June 26, 1778, LAAR, II, 91.

fate with a single glance. His nobility, grace, and presence of mind were never displayed to better advantage."[107]

Shortly after this battle, a French fleet arrived off the coast of Maryland. The twelve ships of the line and four frigates were commanded by the Comte d'Estaing, a distant relative of Lafayette's. Lafayette felt renewed pride as a Frenchman. He wrote Admiral d'Estaing "How happy I would be to find finally the opportunity to shed my blood for my country and to be acknowledged by her."[108] Lafayette would play a crucial role as interpreter and ameliorator of disputes between the French and American officers.

In late July 1778 it was decided to send a joint Franco-American force to attack the British garrison of 3,000 men at Newport on the island of Rhode Island in Narragansett Bay. General John Sullivan commanded the American forces numbering 10,000, organized into two divisions under Lafayette and Nathanael Greene, including 6,000 militia under the command of Massachusetts Governor John Hancock. The French fleet had on board almost 2,000 infantry ready to join in the invasion.

Sullivan wanted his army to cross over to the island first, followed by the French. D'Estaing objected, demanding that simultaneous assaults take place. Although Sullivan agreed, he angered d'Estaing by prematurely sending American troops to occupy fortifications recently abandoned by the British on the north end of the island. Admiral Howe then arrived with a British fleet smaller than the French fleet. After two days of maneuvering to obtain favorable positions from which to attack, the two fleets were scattered and severely damaged by a hurricane lasting almost three days. When the damaged French fleet reorganized, d'Estaing announced his intention to return to Boston for repairs. Lafayette and Greene went aboard the flagship to try to change d'Estaing's mind, but to no avail. The French fleet left on August 21. Sullivan and his

107. Lafayette's Memoirs, LAAR, II, 11.

108. Camp near Paramus, July 14, 1778, LAAR, II, 106.

generals (excluding Lafayette) signed an official protest, saying that d'Estaing's peremptory departure was "derogatory to the honor of France, contrary to the Intention of his most Christian Majesty and the Interest of his nation and destructive in the highest degree to the welfare of the United States of America, and highly injurious to the alliance formed between the two nations."[109] In his general orders for August 24, Sullivan wrote, "The General cannot help lamenting the sudden departure of the French Fleet. . . . He yet hopes that the event will prove America is able to procure that with her own arms what her allies refuse to assist in obtaining."[110]

An irate Lafayette confronted the equally emotional Sullivan and assistants had to keep them apart. Only narrowly was a duel avoided. Sullivan agreed to moderate his view toward d'Estaing in his general orders of August 26, while Lafayette agreed to ride to Boston to try to convince d'Estaing to return. Nathanael Greene wrote Washington that Lafayette's "great thirst for glory and national attachment often runs him into errors. However he did every thing to prevail on the Admiral to cooperate with us that man could do. People censure the Admiral with great freedom and many are imprudent enough to reproach the Nation through the Admiral."[111] After the fleet returned to Boston, anti-French feeling revived old hatreds and at least four French sailors were killed in street violence. Unyielding, the inflexible D'Estaing refused to leave port until repairs were made.

In the meantime, the American ground forces were now imperiled. Within a week of the French departure, half the panicked militia had melted away, while the British forces were inspired. Greene wrote to his deputy in the

109. *Greene Papers,* II, 489. The protest was signed by John Sullivan, Nathanael Greene, John Hancock, William Whipple, John Tyler, and Salomon Lovell.

110. Quoted, LAAR. II, 154.

111. Camp near Newport, August 28, 1778, *Greene Papers,* II, 500.

quartermaster corps: "the Devil has got into the fleet. They are about to desert us, and go round to Boston. The Garrison would be all our own in a few days if the fleet and French forces would but only cooperate with us, but alas they will not. . . . Never was I in a more perplexing situation. To evacuate the Island is death; to stay may be ruin."[112] Sullivan polled his officers and they all agreed that they best get off the island before British reinforcements arrived from nearby New York City. When the Americans withdrew to the northern part of the island, the British and Hessians attacked. The attacks were repulsed repeatedly—twice in hand-to-hand combat by Rhode Island's Black regiment of 130 men. During the night all of the American forces got off the Island. In a forced ride traveling more than seventy miles in seven hours, Lafayette returned in time to play an important role in the evacuation. The next night Admiral Howe's fleet arrived with reinforcements. General Greene reported: "we got off the island in very good season."[113]

A major American victory had been snatched away, but more importantly, old smoldering prejudices reignited anger and resentment between French and American officers that threatened the Franco-American alliance itself. Lafayette wrote to Washington, not as the American commander-in-chief, but as a friend, "to lament with him the ungenerous Sentiments I have been forc'd to see in many American breasts."[114] Lafayette and the other French officers sequestered themselves from American officers and Lafayette let the Americans know "that anything thrown before me against my nation I would take as the most particular affront."[115]

112. Greene to Charles Pettit, Camp [near Newport, R.I.], August 22, 1778, *Greene Papers,* II, 491–92.

113. To George Washington, Camp Tiverton, August 31, 1778, *Greene Papers,* II, 502.

114. Camp near Newport, August 25, 1778, LAAR, II, 151.

115. Ibid., 152.

Sensing the seriousness of the situation, Washington wrote to Lafayette.

> Let me say, I feel every thing that hurts the sensibility of a Gentleman; and, consequently upon the present occasion, feel for you & for our good & great Allys the French. I feel myself hurt also at every illiberal and unthinking reflection which may have been cast upon Count D'Estaing, or the conduct of the Fleet under his command. And, lastly I feel for my Country. Let me entreat you therefore my dear Marquis to take no exception at unmeaning expressions, uttered perhaps without Consideration, & in the first transports of disappointed hope. Every body Sir, who reasons, will acknowledge the advantages which we have derived from the French Fleet, & the Zeal of the Commander of it, but in a free, & republican Government, you cannot restrain the voice of the multitude. Every Man will speak as he thinks, or more properly without thinking—consequently will judge of Effects without attending to the Causes. The censures which have been leveled at the Officers of the French Fleet, would more than probably, have fallen in a much higher degree upon a Fleet of our own (if we had had one) in the same situation. It is the nature of Man to be displeased with any thing that disappoints a favourite hope, or flattering project; and it is the folly of too many of them, to condemn without investigating circumstances. Let me beseech you therefore my good Sir to afford a healing hand to the wound that, unintentially has been made. America esteems your Virtues & your Services and admires the principles upon which you act. Your Countrymen, in our Army, look up to you as their Patron. The

> Count and his Officers consider you as a man high in Rank, & 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 Nations may be promoted and cemented in the firmest manner.[116]

Lafayette told Washington that he had done what he could "for preventing any bad prejudice being taken on either side" and he would continue to "do what I think best for both countries."[117] Lafayette wrote Laurens that "The moment I heard of America I lov'd her. The Moment I knew she was fighting for freedom, I burnt with the desire of bleeding for her—and the moment I shall be able of Serving her in any time or any part of the world, will be among the happiest ones in my life."[118] To counteract more indiscrete letters, Lafayette wrote letters to the French court "in the most favorable colours."[119] Washington thanked the Marquis. "Your endeavours to cherish harmony among the officers of the allied powers, and to dispel those unfavourable impressions which had begun to take place in the Minds of the unthinking (from Misfortunes which the utmost stretch of human foresight could not avert) deserves & now receives, my particular, & warmest thanks."[120]

116. Washington to Lafayette, White Plains, September 1, 1778, LAAR, II, 166.

117. Warren, R.I., September 21, 1778, LAAR, II, 176, 179.

118. To Henry Laurens, Camp near Warren, September 23, 1778, LAAR, II, 180.

119. Nathanael Greene to George Washington, Boston, September 16, 1778, *Greene Papers,* II, 519.

120. Fredericksburg in the State of New York, September 25, 1778, LAAR, II, 182–83.

## GOING HOME

On October 13, 1778, Lafayette asked Congress for leave to go home. Because the armies had entered "a very peaceable and undisturbed moment," he hoped to "be on as a soldier on furlough, who most heart[i]ly wants to join again his colours, and his most esteem'd and belov'd fellow soldiers."[121] To d'Estaing, Lafayette wrote that "I consider Philadelphia a tiresome prison."[122] Congress granted Lafayette the furlough to return to France and to be extended at his own pleasure. Additionally, Congress "In testimony of the high Esteem and Affection in which You are held by the good People of these States, as well as in acknowledgment of your Gallantry and Military Talents display'd on many signal occasions, . . . have ordered an Elegant Sword to be presented to You by the American Minister at the Court of Versailles."[123] Congress also took the occasion to write to King Louis "testifying our deep sense of his [Lafayette's] Zeal, Courage, and attachment. . . . We recommend this young Nobleman to Your Majesty's notice as one whom we know to be Wise in Council, gallant in the Field, and Patient under the hardships of War. His Devotion to his Sovereign hath led him in all things to demean himself as an American, acquiring thereby the confidence of these United States."[124]

In November a "very Severe and dangerous" illness threatened Lafayette's life. "Dying in a shameful bed after having escap'd Some more honorable occasion in the field would have been for me the most cruel disappointment."[125]

121. To the President of Congress, Philadelphia, October 13, 1778, LAAR, II, 190.

122. Philadelphia, October 20, 1778, LAAR, II, 191.

123. President of Congress to Lafayette, Philadelphia, October 24, 1778, LAAR, II, 193.

124. President of Congress Henry Laurens to Louis XVI, Philadelphia, October 21, 1778, 1778, LAAR, II, 194.

125. To Daniel Morgan, Fishkill, November 28, 1778, LAAR, II, 204.

As he prepared to leave, Lafayette wrote a goodbye to his fellow officers in his division. "I schall for all My life feel pleas'd and proud in the idea that I have had the honor of being intrusted with such a division. I anticipate the happiness of finding them Next Campaign, and I dare flatter myself that these gentlemen will not forget a friend and a fellow-soldier who entertains for them all the Sentiments of affection and esteem."[126]

On January 11, 1779, Lafayette set sail from Boston for France aboard the *Alliance,* an American frigate provided by Congress. Winter crossings of the Atlantic always presented dangers, especially during times of war. Near the banks of Newfoundland, the ship encountered a violent storm that toppled the topmast and caused other severe damage that threatened to sink the ship in the icy north Atlantic. With patched leaks, the *Alliance* limped along. As it approached the continent, the officers foiled a mutiny inspired by the British ministry's announcement that any crew that hijacked an enemy ship would receive the full value of the ship once in an English port. With a shortage of sailors available, the *Alliance* had been forced to take on a crew made up principally from British sailors captured by American privateers. The American and French crewmen were not part of the conspiracy. The plan was to be put into play with the cry of "A sail!" When the officers would emerge from their cabins, four cannon would spray them with grapeshot. An American crewman got wind of the mutiny and warned the officers one hour before the plot was scheduled to commence. Secretly the officers armed themselves with muskets and sabers and arrested the leaders of the conspirators. After interrogating the rest of the crew one-by-one, over thirty men were put in chains. Others were implicated, but the officers pretended to trust them.[127]

126. Ibid.

127. Lafayette's Memoirs, LAAR, II, 226. About a year later, thirty-nine conspirators were exchanged for American prisoners of war.

The *Alliance* reached Brest on February 6. Almost two years had passed since Lafayette left French soil to assist America. He was tearful in returning. The authorities "questioned, complimented, and exiled" Lafayette to Paris where he was confined to the Hôtel de Noailles. The Bastille, Lafayette remembered, was first recommended for his imprisonment. Lafayette was "in the king's disfavor" and was "forbidden to appear in any public place."[128]

Madame de Lafayette was overjoyed with the return of her husband. Her happiness, she wrote, was "easy to believe and hard to express! The price this happiness has cost me may be compared only with this joy." Her husband had returned "as modest and charming" as when he left. She thanked God for preserving the life of "the most distinguished and lovable person in the world," and for "my good fortune in being his wife."[129] Privately, together they grieved for the death of their elder daughter Henriette, who had died in October 1777.

A few days passed before Lafayette sent a brilliantly crafted letter to the king explaining why he had gone to America. The king invited him to a Sunday morning levee at which Lafayette received a mild reprimand. Once pardoned, Lafayette became the center of public attention—ministers consulted him and women kissed him. The next day Lafayette met with Benjamin Franklin and gave the old diplomat his commission as American minister plenipotentiary to France. Lafayette obtained the Regiment of the King's Dragoons and a promotion from captain to *mestre de camp*—the equivalent of colonel. Lafayette pondered his last two years—he "had left as rebel and fugitive, and returned in triumph as an idol."[130]

128. Lafayette's Memoirs, LAAR, II, 226; and Adrienne de Lafayette to Mlle. du Motier and Mme. de Chavaniac, Paris, February 16, 1779, LAAR, II, 230.

129. To Mlle du Motier and Mme de Chavaniac, Paris, February 16, 1779, LAAR, II, 230–31.

130. Lafayette's Memoirs as quoted in Unger, *Lafayette,* 94.

Until he returned to America—thirteen months later—Lafayette would look upon "the affairs of America . . . as my first Business while I am in Europe."[131] He regularly consulted Benjamin Franklin and John Adams and lobbied the French ministers of state—foreign affairs, finance, and war—for loans. He hunted with the king and strolled through the Bois de Boulogne with the queen. He continually asked for loans and arms, ammunition, and clothing, and, most importantly, that a French fleet with an accompanying French expeditionary force be sent to America. John Adams reported from Paris that Lafayette "has been the invariable and indefatigable Friend of America, in all Times, Places and Occasions, and his Assiduity have done Us much service."[132]Although he volunteered his services to be on the commission negotiating peace between America and Britain, he rejected a diplomatic career. Such a career, Lafayette told Foreign Minister Vergennes, "would please me very much . . . if a strong influence, an inexpressible attraction, did not draw me to the military profession."[133]

As a way to raise money for America, Lafayette developed a scheme to harass British coastal towns. He would lead a force of four to five thousand infantry, cavalry, and artillery that would be transported by a squadron of ships (perhaps rented from Sweden) commanded by John Paul Jones, the intrepid American naval officer who had already attacked British coastal towns. Unless the towns paid tribute, Lafayette and Jones would wreak havoc. Towns would not be too heavily assessed, and they would be given time to collect some of the funds and could pay the balance as ransom for prominent townsmen who would be taken

131. Lafayette to the President of Congress, St. Jean d'Angely near Rochefort, June 12, 1779, LAAR, II, 273.

132. To Abigail Adams, Paris, February 28, 1780, L. H. Butterfield and Marc Friedlaender, eds., *Adams Family Correspondence* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973), III, 290.

133. Le Havre, August 16, 1779, LAAR, II, 302.

hostage. After paying the expenses of the harassment expedition, the balance of funds raised would be sent to America to assist in paying for soldiers' salaries and war materiel. Both Lafayette and Jones relished the opportunity to bring the war home to Britain. Jones wrote Lafayette: "I cannot Insure success but *we will endeavour to deserve it.*"[134] The plan was scuttled just when it was about to be implemented, and Lafayette was sent to the south of France seemingly in exile from military action, from the court, and from his family.

Instead of harassing the British coastline, French diplomats had secretly negotiated with Spain to get it to declare war on Britain and then to participate in a full-scale invasion of England with an army of twenty thousand men. Lafayette pleaded with Vergennes to be part of the invasion force. "Don't forget that I love the trade of war passionately, that I consider myself especially to play that game, that I have been spoiled for two years by the habit of having been in command and of winning great confidence. . . . After all that, Monsieur le Comte judge whether I have the right to be the first to reach that shore and the first to plant the French flag in the heart of that insolent nation."[135] Lafayette was assigned to the invasion force, but administrative delay, smallpox, storms and the swift and elusive British navy, which avoided direct engagement with their larger more lumbering enemy, postponed the invasion into September, a notoriously stormy month for a crossing of the English Channel. The invasion was cancelled.

While Lafayette awaited the invasion in August at L'Havre, Benjamin Franklin sent his grandson to give to Lafayette the magnificent ceremonial sword commissioned by Congress. Crafted by the most "exquisite Artists" of France, the sword had a gold handle with various carvings

134. L'Orient, May 1, 1779, LAAR, II, 264–65.

135. St. Jean d'Angely, June 10, 1779, quoted in Unger, *Lafayette,* 101.

of Lafayette's coat of arms and some of the battles in which he participated in America. Franklin found "it easy to express every thing, but the Sense we have of your Worth & of our Obligations to you. For this, Figures & even Words are found insufficient."[136] With his "unbounded Gratitude," Lafayette thanked Franklin for "too honorable a Reward for those Slight Services which in Concert with my fellow soldiers, and under the God like American hero's orders, I had the Good luck to Render." With "a heart glowing with love" for America, Lafayette would ever maintain a "most ardent zeal for their Glory and happiness."[137] Lafayette invited the young Franklin to join the invasion of England as an aide to him. Benjamin Franklin thanked Lafayette for the honor bestowed on his grandson. He hoped that his grandson might "catch from you some Tincture of those engaging Manners that make you so much the Delight of all that know you."[138]

When Lafayette had been in America he grew homesick for France. His love of country grew. Strangely, however, the same thing happened in reverse while back in France. He longed for America. He wrote to President of Congress Laurens "that never any thing was so warmly and passionately wish'd for, as I desire to Return again to that Country of which I shall ever consider myself as a citizen."[139] On the same day he wrote General Washington, "What I want, . . . what would make me the happiest of men, is to join again American colours, or to put under your orders a division of four or five thousand country men of mine."[140] He told Washington that he considered himself "an American citizen." He would do everything possible so that "the alliance and friendship between Both

136. Franklin to Lafayette, Passy, August 24, 1779, LAAR, II, 303–4.

137. L'Havre, August 29, 1779, LAAR, II, 304.

138. Franklin to Lafayette, Passy, October 1, 1779, LAAR, II, 320.

139. St. Jean d'Angely Near Rochefort, June 12, 1779, LAAR, II, 272–73.

140. LAAR, II, 278.

nations will be establish'd in such a way as will last for ever."[141] To Benjamin Franklin he wrote that his "warmest desire is to serve again with my fellow soldiers of the American army." He would immediately leave for America once leaders in France and America "will Believe that my going there is more useful than my staying here."[142] Again writing Laurens, Lafayette referred to himself as "one, who will ever Boast in the Name of an American Soldier, and whose delight has been long ago, in sharing the same fortune as the American people, never to be Considered But as a Country man of theirs."[143]

After thirteen months in France, Lafayette felt compelled to return to America. Adrienne had given birth to another child—a boy they named George Washington "as a tribute of Respect and love for my dear friend Genl. Washington."[144] After a formal parting with the king, while dressed in the full regimentals of an American major general, with his beautiful ceremonial sword, Lafayette prepared to leave for America a second time—this time with the king's blessing.[145] Now, in early March 1780, three years after his initial secretive sailing, Lafayette set sail for America aboard *L'Hermione*, a French frigate provided by the king specifically for his voyage. Five weeks later he landed in Boston.

## THE SECOND AMERICAN TOUR

Despite contrary winds and periods of calm, *L'Hermione* arrived in Boston harbor on April 26, 1780, after a passage of thirty-eight days. The ship, Lafayette wrote, "sails like

141. Ibid., 280.

142. L'Havre, July 12, 1779, LAAR, II, 292.

143. L'Havre, October 7, 1779, LAAR, II, 320–21.

144. Lafayette to Benjamin Franklin, Paris, December 24, 1779, LAAR, II, 341.

145. John Adams to James Lovell, Paris, February 29, 1780, Gregg L. Lint et al., eds., *Papers of John Adams* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989), VIII, 380.

a bird," and the delightful captain, "though full of military ardor . . . avoided all opportunities for battle" in order to guarantee the safe arrival of Lafayette. Before he left the ship, Lafayette wrote to Washington: "Here I am, My dear General." Lafayette wanted to meet with Washington as soon as possible to deliver important good news.[146]

Boston greeted Lafayette's arrival with fanfare—"to the Caresses of a greatful people."[147]

> They welcomed me with the roar of guns, the ringing of all the city's bells, the music of a band that marched ahead of us, and the huzzas of all the people that surrounded us. In this way I was led to the house that the council and assembly of representatives of Boston had prepared for me. There was a deputation from these bodies to welcome me; I asked to present myself to the two chambers assembled for that purpose, and I struggled to remember my English during the hour that I stayed there. In the evening the people gathered in front of my door and built a great bonfire with much cheering, which lasted until after midnight. When I left Boston all the people came to wait in front of my house for the moment of my departure, and there was no demonstration of fondness or affection that this huge crowd did not give me in escorting me out of the town.[148]

Mercy Otis Warren reported that "A general satisfaction was diffused through each countenance, and every expression of respect manifested on his arrival. And while the heroic character of this accomplished young nobleman,

146. Boston Harbor, April 27, 1780, LAAR, III, 3.

147. Samuel A. Otis to Nathanael Greene, April 30, 1780, *Greene Papers,* V, 538.

148. To Adrienne de Lafayette, Waterbury, on the route from Boston camp, May 6, 1780, LAAR, III, 9.

engages universal esteem and admiration, his easy manners, his affable demeanor, and his polite address, win him the hearts of all who have the honour of his acquaintance."[149] John Adams had written to his wife, Abigail, hoping that Lafayette would visit her in Braintree, only eight miles southeast of Boston, but warning her that Lafayette might be "too impatient to get to the Field of Honour, which from the Keenness of his Passion for Glory, may very possibly be the Case."[150]

On May 2 Lafayette left Boston on horseback to meet with Washington. Each town that Lafayette passed through honored his arrival and departure with "the roar of guns" and the greetings of prominent citizens. Washington wrote to Lafayette warning him to be alert for Tory settlements in New York. Lafayette arrived at the commander's headquarters on May 10 and for the next four days discussed the strategy for the next campaign to be waged with two armies—American and French. Washington gave Lafayette a letter of introduction to Congress.

> I am perswaded Congress will participate in the joy I feel at the return of a Gentleman who has distinguished himself in the service of this Country so signally—who has given so many & so decisive proofs of his attachments to the interests—and who ought to be dear to it by every motive. The warm friendship I have for him conspires with considerations of public utility to afford me a double satisfaction in his return. . . . He merits and I doubt not Congress will give him every mark of consideration and regard in their power.[151]

149. To John Adams, Boston, May 8, 1780, Gregg L. Lint et al., eds., *Papers of John Adams* (Cambridge, Mass., 1996), IX, 288.

150. Paris, February 28, 1780, *Adams Family Correspondence,* III, 291. Adams was correct in his presumption; Lafayette did not visit Abigail Adams at Braintree.

151. Washington to the President of Congress, Morristown, N.J., May 13, 1780, LAAR, III, 11.

Lafayette addressed Congress on May 16. After a long period in which he "Gloried in the Name of an American soldier," he heartily returned eager "again to join My Colours, under which I May hope for opportunities of Indulging the ardent zeal, the Unbounded Gratitude, the warm, and, I Might Say, the Patriotic Love By which I am for ever Bound to America."[152]

While preparing to leave France, Lafayette had informed the government ministers that he had "no status in America other than that of an American officer" in the Continental army. His full attention would be devoted "to the care of the troops under my command and to the activities of a purely military life." He would not be able to participate in diplomatic, political, or economic matters. The French minister of war assured Lafayette that while in America he must consider himself "only as an American officer."[153] However, Lafayette was instructed to do two special things: (1) tell Congress and Washington that France was sending a naval fleet with an expeditionary force of 7,500 men, and (2) serve as a liaison between the French forces and Congress and Washington. Lafayette was to assure the Americans that the French troops were a "reinforcement" force—not an invasion force. The French army was there to assist Washington, not independently to conduct campaigns against the British. The French fleet with seven ships of the line under the command of Admiral Ternay arrived at Newport in mid-July 1780. The expeditionary force consisted of only 5,100 men. A second division of 2,400 men never left France. Still, Lafayette was very proud of this French support for the American cause. He relished the opportunity of being the liaison between the armed forces of the allied nations.

Soon after his arrival Lafayette was asked by Washington to write proclamations urging the French Canadians and

152. Philadelphia, May 16, 1780, LAAR, III, 13.

153. Lafayette to the Chevalier de La Luzerne, Philadelphia, May 17, 1780, LAAR, II, 22–23.

the Indians of the North to ally with France and the Americans. The proclamations should be a "mystery"—non-official—and Lafayette should give the impression that he personally would command the corps of the Continental army that would combine with the French Canadians and Indians in fighting the British. Canada should be promised full and equal status in the American Confederation.[154]

## COMMANDING THE FLYING CAMP

In mid-July Washington offered Lafayette the command of a division of light infantry. Lafayette wanted this hand-picked division to be made up of men "mostly of a middle size, Active, robust and Trusty." They should be veterans. Noncommissioned officers were especially important to Lafayette because he regarded "them as the soul of the regiments."[155] The division, according to Lafayette "delightfully organized,"[156] consisted of 1,800 rank-and-file infantry, not counting the officers, sergeants, and musicians; "a hundred *Riflemen*, half-savage men armed with great carbines" who with charcoal-camouflaged faces yelled menacingly while in combat; and a legion of three hundred men, half infantry and half cavalry. Lafayette's "flying camp" always served "three or four miles ahead of the army, which we do not depend on for support services."[157]

Knowing the importance of appearance to morale, Lafayette always tried to get the best uniforms and equip-

154. Washington to Lafayette, Morris Town, May 19, 1789, LAAR, II, 24–25; Lafayette's Proclamation to the Canadians, c. May 25, 1789, LAAR, III, 36–39.

155. Lafayette to Baron von Steuben, Camp at Preakness, July 16, 1780, LAAR, III, 91, 92n.

156. To the Prince de Poix, New Windsor on the North River, January 30, 1781, LAAR, III, 302.

157. Lafayette to the Vicomte de Noailles, Light camp near Fort Lee, September 2, 1780, LAAR, III, 157; and Lafayette to the Prince du Prix, At camp near Totowa, October 14, 1780, LAAR, III, 200.

ment for his men, often spending his own money in outfitting them. He ordered red and black feathers, cockades, and epaulets for the officers. Every officer received a handsome sword crafted in France. Such weapons were unavailable in America at the time. New uniforms could be purchased by officers at cost.[158] The Marquis de Chastellux, second in command to Rochambeau, wrote that "these troops made a very good appearance, were better clothed than the rest of the army; the uniforms both of the officers and soldiers were smart and military, and each soldier wore a helmet of hard leather, with a crest of horsehair. The officers are armed with spontoons, or rather with halfpikes, and the subalterns with fusils [a light flintlock musket]; but both were provided with short and light sabers, brought from France and presented to them by M. de La Fayette."[159] All of this instilled an *esprit de corps*. Lafayette's flying camp was ready to fight.

Despite the optimism promised by the arrival of the French expeditionary force, 1780 was the low point of the Revolution for most Americans. Lafayette, eager as always to fight, was repeatedly frustrated as very little combat occurred outside of South Carolina, where the British had focused a new offensive. Lafayette complained to Baron von Steuben that he was "suffering from what, of all ills, I fear most—uncertainty."[160] On several occasions Lafayette told Washington "that he was pushing the fear of danger to an extreme, but [Washington] replied that the confidence with which the king honored him required a redoubling of delicacy and prudence."[161] Washington wrote Lafayette that he misunderstood him if he thought that Washington had given up on capturing New York City. In

158. Lafayette to Matthias Ogden, Light Camp, September 16, 1780, LAAR, III, 173.

159. The Marquis de Chastellux's Description of Lafayette's Light Camp, November 23, 1780, LAAR, III, 232–33.

160. Camp at Preakness, July 16, 1780, LAAR, III, 91.

161. Lafayette to the Comte de Vergennes, At camp in New Jersey, July 19, 1780, LAAR, III, 101.

fact, Washington had just devised a plan to attack New York City that required the cooperation of French naval and ground forces. Unfortunately, shortly after Rochambeau had landed his army, Sir Henry Clinton left New York City with a force to capture Newport.[162] Rochambeau could not support Washington's assault on New York City; he was determined to defend Newport "to the last man." Washington told a disappointed Lafayette that the attack on New York City was off. "I perceive my Dear Marquis you are determined at all events to take New York, and that obstacles only increase your zeal."[163]

## MAINTAINING THE ALLIANCE

Washington sent Lafayette to Newport to confer with Rochambeau and Ternay. In a letter to the French commanders, Washington assured them that: "As a General officer I have the greatest confidence in him [Lafayette]; as a friend he is perfectly acquainted with my sentiments and opinions; he knows all the circumstances of our army and the country at large; all the information he gives and all the positions he makes, I entreat you will consider as coming from me." Washington wrote that he concealed nothing from Lafayette and that he "is charged by me to settle with you all arrangements whatsoever relative to the intended cooperation."[164]

After a lengthy meeting with the French officers, Lafayette recorded both his position and theirs. Lafayette wanted the French fleet immediately to proceed to New York City even before naval superiority was established. The army should abandon its camp on the island of Rhode Island and re-situate on the mainland around Providence. Finally, he explained that the expeditionary force must move immediately before the weather changed. Lafayette

162. Washington to Lafayette, Headquarters, July 16, 1780, LAAR, III, 95.

163. To Lafayette, Preakness, July 27, 1780, LAAR, III, 112.

164. July 16, 1780, quoted in LAAR, III, 120n.

altered some of the French positions slightly and one significantly. Admiral Ternay made it perfectly clear that he would not take his ships into New York harbor "*under any circumstances.*" Lafayette incorrectly recorded Ternay's position as "If the French fleet is equal to that of the enemy, it will fight at once for superiority; if it is superior, it will with all speed take the French troops from Rhode Island and carry them into the bay designated for the landing" at New York City.[165]

Lafayette understood correctly that the French commanders were unhappy with him. They considered him "too American."[166] They explained to Minister Luzerne that after agreeing on all points, Lafayette had altered some of them significantly. Influenced by "some hotheaded persons, he proposes extravagant things to us" that would endanger everyone. He was motivated by political considerations that called for immediate and swift action. None of Lafayette's radical proposals appeared in Washington's letters to the French commanders. They were "infinitely satisfied" with Washington's dispatches. In the future they would deal directly with the American commander-in-chief; not with "some young and ardent persons . . . around him." They had not responded to Lafayette's letter.[167]

When he heard about the French commanders' complaint, Lafayette wrote an apology—a very strange apology. Everything in the letter, he said, was true, and Washington agreed with everything in the letter. The political opinions should have been left for Minister La Luzerne to handle, but Luzerne agreed with everything that Lafayette had written. Lafayette would try to do better in the future and he would try to arrange a meeting between them and Washington.[168]

165. In camp before Dobbs Ferry, August 9, 1780, LAAR, III, 131–36.

166. Lafayette to the Chevalier de La Luzerne, In camp near Tappan, August 11, 1780, LAAR, III, 137.

167. The Comte de Rochambeau to the Chevalier de La Luzerne, Newport, August 14, 1780, LAAR, III, 141.

168. Lafayette to Rochambeau and Ternay, In camp, August 18, 1780, LAAR, III, 144–46.

Lafayette then wrote a letter of apology only to Rochambeau, whom Lafayette had known and admired for many years. Again he did not confess to misstating the French position intentionally. He apologized in very general terms four times in the relatively short letter. He emphasized how he had repeatedly praised the French government and its decision to send an expeditionary force. He confessed that he was embarrassed when the French force would not leave Newport and fight. Lafayette concluded that "my error was in writing officially with passion what you would have excused to my youth had I written it as a friend to you alone." He was sorry that Rochambeau was displeased.[169]

Lafayette sent Luzerne copies of his letters to the French commanders. "You will see by my replies that, without being at fault, I ask for pardon; I would even go on my knees if they wish and I think I would let myself be beaten. I could not keep myself from letting it be known, however, that they were a bit mistaken." In the future he would not allow politics to interfere with his military advice. He asked Luzerne to intervene and enlighten the French generals.[170] Luzerne responded diplomatically. "I share your opinion about one part of the political disadvantages of the delays that circumstances force upon us," but he could not advise the generals on military matters; he could only give them advice about public opinion. Luzerne reminded Lafayette that "public talk, whatever attention it may merit in a republican government, must, however, never force a general to actions he believes to be dangerous." Perhaps, if New York City cannot be attacked, Lafayette should concentrate his efforts in the South. Whatever he decided to do, Luzerne advised Lafayette that "it is better in every way to defer than to run overly large risks. . . . Far from disapproving of your letter to our generals, I rediscover in it your zeal and your patriotism, and even the

169. In camp, August 18, 1780, LAAR, III, 146–48.

170. In the light division camp, August 18, 1780, LAAR, III, 148–49.

impatience you display seems to me a laudable sentiment." But Luzerne had to be frank. "I confess to you that the experience they have acquired makes me side with the [generals'] view." Luzerne hoped that the generals would meet with Washington. He also was "very pleased with your determination to end this little dispute by showing total deference to M. le comte de Rochambeau. You could not make a wiser and more honorable decision and it is the best calculated to assure the good understanding so necessary to us."[171]

Rochambeau responded to Lafayette as "an old father" would reply "to a cherished son whom he loves and esteems immensely." "It is always praiseworthy, my dear marquis, to believe the French are invincible, but I am going to confide in you a great secret based on forty years' experience. There are no troops easier to defeat than when they have lost confidence in their commander, and they lose that confidence immediately when they have been put in danger because of private or personal ambition." Of the fifteen thousand men who had "been killed or wounded under my command in the various ranks and in the most murderous actions, I need not reproach myself that a single one was killed for my advantage." Rochambeau ended with heartfelt fatherly advice. "Be well assured, therefore, of my warmest friendship and that, if I have pointed out to you very gently the things in your last letter that displeased me, I concluded immediately that the warmth of your feelings and your heart had somewhat overheated the calmness and prudence of your judgment. Preserve this last quality in council, and keep all of the first for the moment of action. This is still the old father Rochambeau speaking to his dear son Lafayette, whom he loves and will continue to love and esteem to his last breath."[172]

Lafayette explained to his wife that "a small burst of frankness caused me a dispute with the (land and naval)

171. Philadelphia, August 19, 1780, LAAR, III, 150–51.

172. Newport, August 27, 1780, LAAR, III, 155–57.

generals; as I saw that I could not persuade them and that it is important for public affairs that we be good friends, I said without further thought that I had been wrong, that I had committed a fault, and I asked their pardon for it in proper terms. That had such a marvelous effect that we now get along better than ever."[173]

In mid-September 1780, Washington and Lafayette traveled to Hartford, Connecticut, where they met with Rochambeau and Ternay. Lafayette served as interpreter and secretary. They all agreed that New York City and Long Island were the prime targets for a coordinated attack. Naval superiority and an army of thirty thousand were needed to attack, blockade, and capture the city. Superiority in naval and ground forces was also required because of the likelihood of easy British reinforcement from New York City. Thus, the key was the "need to reinforce the fleet and the army with ships, men, and money."[174] Lafayette reported to French Foreign Minister Vergennes that "the best understanding prevails between the generals and the troops of both nations."[175]

Four months later, after Admiral Ternay died, Lafayette described the two French commanders to his wife. Admiral Ternay "was ill-tempered and stubborn, but firm, clear-sighted, and intelligent, and all things considered, his death is a loss to us." Rochambeau "is a very good officer. He was angry with me once because I was right, but I rather basely begged his pardon, and we are very good friends because I always take the blame. He is basically a good man, though a bit of an egoist, and I suspect he is slightly jealous."[176]

173. Near Fort Lee opposite Fort Washington on the North River, October 7, 1780, LAAR, III, 194.

174. Summary of the Hartford Conference, September 22, 1780, LAAR, III, 175–78.

175. At the light infantry camp at Harrington, October 4, 1780, LAAR, III, 190.

176. To Adrienne de Lafayette, New Windsor on the North River, February 2, 1781, LAAR, III, 310.

## A TREASONOUS AFFAIR

On the way back to headquarters, Washington and Lafayette visited General Benedict Arnold at West Point, America's most strategic fort on the upper Hudson River. It was at this time that Arnold's treason was exposed. The traitor escaped to the British frigate *Vulture*, but his accomplice, Major John André, the adjutant general of the British army, was arrested and charged with being a spy. Lafayette served on the military tribunal that found André guilty and sentenced him to death by hanging. André, a charming sophisticated man, asked for the soldier's honor of a firing squad, but Washington felt compelled to show no mercy in this dastardly case. Anguished over the entire affair, Lafayette felt "sadness and respect for [André's] character. I truly suffered in condemning him, but he was an officer under disguised clothing and name, passing within our posts with papers full of intelligence for the enemy, and he himself did not hesitate to recognize himself as a spy."[177] Lafayette chastised himself for "the foolishness to let myself acquire a true affection for him" "during the three days that we held him."[178]

## COMBATING INACTIVITY

The inactivity of the campaign made Lafayette restless. He told Washington that he felt "it very important, Nay I might Say politically Necessary that Some thing Brilliant Be at this Time perform'd by our troops." Such activity especially for his light infantry "would put them in Spirits for the Campaign."[179] He told his brother-in-law and his wife that "inactivity kills me,"[180] knowing that "Paris is

177. Lafayette to the Vicomte de Noailles, Light camp, Harrington, N.J., October 3, 1780, LAAR, III, 182.

178. To Adrienne de Lafayette, Near Fort Lee opposite Fort Washington on the North River, October 7, 1780, LAAR, III, 195.

179. Light Infantry Camp, August 14, 1780, LAAR, III, 142.

180. To the Vicomte de Noailles, Light Camp near Fort Lee, September 2, 1780, LAAR, III, 158.

expecting glorious reports, and we unfortunates are reduced to the most listless inactivity."[181] Eager to fight, Lafayette told Washington that "Unless we hunt for enterprises they will no more Come in our way this Campaign." He proposed two projects. Lafayette would attack Staten Island and Henry "Light-Horse Harry" Lee would attack Hackensack. Both should catch the enemy napping.[182] Lee successfully carried out his mission inflicting light losses to the enemy without a loss to his legion. Lafayette's mission failed to materialize.

Lafayette had "constructed a charming plan" that would have allowed him to capture three enemy fortifications on Staten Island with virtually no resistance. Through an elaborate system of spies, Lafayette knew where all the British and Hessian troops were stationed, the times and manner of their patrols, and the quarters of their important officers. He had selected the date (the night of October 26–27) and "had calculated the moon, the tide, and the probability of fog." As a diversion, he had planned for that night a dinner celebration honoring Luzerne and Washington. The men were in tip-top shape as they had prepared for the review of troops by Luzerne. Just before Lafayette sat down for the dinner, he announced the plan to his corps commanders who knew nothing ahead of time. "You can imagine," Lafayette wrote, "the universal joy." Later that evening Lafayette joined his division as they marched to meet the five boats that would transport them stealthily to the island. When they arrived only three of the boats were there and the mission had to be scuttled. To get the division across would have taken twice the time. "I saw then that I would be caught by the daylight, that the advantage I had hoped for was based on the enemy's negligence, and that instead of a surprise I would find myself making

181. Lafayette to Adrienne de Lafayette, Near Fort Lee opposite Fort Washington, on the North River, October 7, 1780, LAAR, III, 193.

182. To George Washington, Light Camp near Totowa, October 12, 1780, LAAR, III, 199.

an attack in which I would lose more men than I would take. I therefore gave up the enterprise." Lafayette condemned Timothy Pickering, "a worthless fool of a quartermaster general," who had on several occasions assured him that the boats would be waiting for him.[183]

Lafayette continued to believe that a victory was important before going into winter encampment. The American public wanted to see its army fight, foreign critics would be silenced, especially Frenchmen who believed that Americans wanted the French to do their fighting for them. Finally, the danger of a foreign mediation to settle the war would work to Britain's favor if America looked as if it couldn't even win a single battle. Lafayette wanted "To find an expedition which may wear a Brilliant aspect, which affords probable advantages, and an immense tho very Remote one, which if unsuccessfull does not turn fatal to us, for the loss of two or three hundred men half of them Being inlisted for two months I don't Consider as a fatal adventure." It was important for the private glory of both Washington and Lafayette, not so much in America, but in Europe that something be done. Lafayette knew that Washington "would not insist upon Steps of this nature, unless I knew that they were politically necessary."[184] Lafayette proposed that American forces cross the North River and capture Fort Washington, about twelve miles north of New York City on Manhattan Island. Depending upon Sir Henry Clinton's response, the American forces could either capture all of the British fortifications on the northern part of the island or possibly even capture New York City. Washington responded with caution.

> It is impossible my Dear Marquis to desire more ardently than I do to terminate the campaign by

183. Lafayette to the Vicomte de Noailles, At the light division camp near Cranestown, October 28, 1780, LAAR, III, 209–10.

184. To George Washington, Light Camp, October 30, 1780, LAAR, III, 210–11.

> some happy stroke; but we must consult our means rather than our wishes, and not endeavour to better our affairs by attempting things, which for the want [i.e., the lack of] of success may make them worse. We are to lament that there has been a misapprehension of our circumstances in Europe; but to recover our reputation, we should take care that we do not injure it more.[185]

Rather than face an inactive winter encampment, Lafayette sounded out Nathanael Greene about joining the Southern Army in command of a flying camp. By late November 1780, Washington's army went into winter encampment at New Windsor, New York, and Washington dissolved Lafayette's flying camp. Knowing Lafayette's dissatisfaction, Washington approved his transfer to the South but warned that it might create animosity if Lafayette leapfrogged over other officers who had been fighting in the South for months. Meanwhile Vergennes warned Lafayette against impetuousness. "In your first campaigns your reputation was yet to be made, you had to risk everything to acquire it. It is made now, and your valor will pass for imprudence if you endanger yourself needlessly."[186] Lafayette faced a quandary. He did not want to leave Washington's family where he could continue to counsel the commander-in-chief, but "the love of glory spurs me on."[187]

## CAPTURING THE TRAITOR

In January 1781 three events helped Lafayette make his decision. A severe storm at Gardiner's Bay off Long Island severely damaged and scattered a British squadron, giving the French fleet at Newport a temporary superiority. The

185. Headquarters, Totowa, October 30, 1789, LAAR, III, 214.

186. Versailles, December 1, 1780, LAAR, III, 239.

187. Lafayette in separate letters to Alexander Hamilton and George Washington, Philadelphia, December 9, 1780, LAAR, III, 253, 255.

Chevalier de Destouches, the interim commander of the French fleet, informed Washington that he was prepared to send several ships to assist in an American ground assault. The target chosen by Washington for this joint Franco-American attack was to be the traitor Benedict Arnold, now a major general in the British army. Arnold had recently left New York and was marauding in southern Virginia with a detachment of about twelve hundred men. Washington chose Lafayette to have the honor of commanding the campaign to capture the traitor.

In addition to his three regiments of fifteen hundred New England and New Jersey Continentals, Lafayette was named supreme commander of all forces in Virginia. Once in the Chesapeake, he was instructed to "act as your own judgment and circumstances shall direct," but he was specifically prohibited from granting prisoner of war status to Arnold. As a traitor, he was to be summarily executed. Washington wished Lafayette "a successful issue to the enterprise and all the glory Which I am persuaded you will deserve."[188]

The French ships delayed leaving Newport, which allowed the British time to repair and regroup their fleet. The fleets engaged at Cape Henry, at the opening of the Chesapeake. Both squadrons sustained serious damage. The French ships limped back to Newport, leaving the Chesapeake exposed to British frigates and privateers and unsafe for American transport vessels.

At a time when numerous mutinies were occurring in the American army, largely because the soldiers had not been paid, Lafayette's troops were eager for combat. Before they left headquarters Lafayette requested and received one month's advance pay for his soldiers.[189] Marching thirty miles a day through heavy rain on roads that were "shockingly bad," the detachment reached Head of Elk,

188. Instructions from George Washington, Headquarters New Windsor, February 20, 1781, LAAR, III, 335–36.

189. Report of the Board of War to Congress, War Office, February 28, 1781, LAAR, III, 355–56.

Maryland,[190] only to find that the quartermaster corps had not delivered the boats needed to transport them to the opening of Chesapeake Bay where Arnold was operating. While boats were being impressed from the public, Lafayette and a guard of thirty men went ahead to reconnoiter. With no French naval support (and not knowing that the French fleet had gone back to Newport), Lafayette agreed to transport the troops to Annapolis on impressed boats, only about one-quarter of the way to Portsmouth where Arnold was encamped. Local seamen accused Lafayette of timidity, but now the normally fearless Lafayette refused to risk his men at sea in unarmed vessels with "the Number of Small [British] frigates and Privateers that Are in the Bay" sailing unchallenged.[191]

Lafayette continued his reconnaissance in Yorktown and then in Williamsburg. When he received word that a British fleet had arrived to reinforce Arnold with two thousand men, commanded by General William Phillips, Lafayette presumed that the long overdue French fleet would never arrive. With orders to march the troops back "as soon as we Loose the Naval Superiority in this Quarter," Lafayette decided to give up the mission and return to headquarters via Head of Elk.[192] The costly mission was a total failure except that Lafayette had gained valuable knowledge of the region and its political and military leaders. Washington consoled Lafayette that "every thing practicable" had been done, but without French control of the Chesapeake—"the point upon which the whole turned"—there was no chance of success.[193]

190. Lafayette to Washington, Morristown, February 24, 1781, LAAR, III, 344. Head of Elk was the town at the furthest navigable point on the Elk River, which flowed southwestwardly into the Chesapeake.

191. Lafayette to George Washington, On Board the *Dolphin*, March 9, 1781, LAAR, III, 389; and Lafayette to George Washington, York, March 15, 1781, LAAR, III, 397.

192. Lafayette to George Washington, Williamsburg, March 23 and 26, 1781, LAAR, III, 409, 417.

193. Washington to Lafayette, Headquarters, New Windsor, April 5, 1781, LAAR, IV, 6–7.

## THE VIRGINIA CAMPAIGN

Shortly after Lafayette moved his detachment back to Head of Elk, he received new orders from Washington to proceed south to reinforce General Nathanael Greene in South Carolina. Lafayette's men, all Northerners, opposed such a venture. They had expected to be in Virginia only a month or two in the spring with cool weather attempting to capture Benedict Arnold. South Carolina was too far away from home, too hot, too sickly, and the mission would take too long. The detachment was not properly equipped for such a long march in such heat. "Dissatisfaction and Desertion" were "Greater evils than any other we have to fear." While writing this letter, Lafayette was notified that nine Rhode Islanders, "the Best men they had who have made many campaigns," had deserted. The men "say that they like better [a] Hundred Lashes than a journey to the Southward. . . . The idea of remaining in the southern states appear to them Intolerable and they are Amazingly averse to the people and climate. I shall do my Best, but if this disposition lasts, I am afraid we will be reduced lower than I dare express."[194]

Lafayette knew he had to take serious measures to stem the desertions. First, the men had to be moved south across the Susquehanna River to Baltimore further away from home. Then, in an emotional address, he threw shame upon desertion. Two deserters were then captured—one was hanged; the other and another soldier who had misbehaved were sent back to headquarters in disgrace. To ease the dissatisfaction, Lafayette bought £2,000 worth of hats, shoes, blankets, shirts, and pants from Baltimore merchants using his personal credit.[195] Lafayette bought another 100 pair of shoes in Alexandria, and Washington

194. To Washington, Susquehanna Ferry, April 14, 1781, LAAR IV, 30–33.

195. Lafayette to Nathanael Greene, Baltimore, April 17, 1781, LAAR, IV, 38.

sent Lafayette 1,200 shirts, pants, shoes, and socks.[196]

On April 22, Washington notified Lafayette that General Greene felt that "it is essential" that General Phillips's army "should be held in check." Since that could not be done with militia alone, Lafayette was ordered to stay in Virginia and was put in command of all American troops in the state.[197] Later on the same day, Washington had a change of heart. Believing that Lafayette would be useful as a liaison between the French and American commanders, Washington invited Lafayette to return to headquarters if he felt the inclination to relinquish his command. Lafayette's detachment, however, had to stay in Virginia.[198]

Lafayette received word that General Phillips was intent on capturing Richmond, the site of a major Continental Army storage depot and numerous tobacco warehouses. Leaving his tents and artillery behind, Lafayette raced for Richmond with 900 men, arriving on April 29. Phillips and his 2,300 men arrived the next day. When Phillips realized that Lafayette had already occupied the city, "He flew into a Violent passion and Swore Vengeance Against" Lafayette and his corps.[199] But not now. Phillips decided not to try to take the city. Lafayette had the supplies and the tobacco safely removed before abandoning Richmond.

General Greene expected that the reinforced British would step up their offensive campaign in Virginia. Greene had great confidence in Lafayette's "ability zeal and good conduct," but advised him "not to let the love of fame get the better of your prudence and plunge you into a misfortune, in too eager a pursuit after glory." This, he said, "is

196. Lafayette to the Chevalier de La Luzerne, Alexandria, April 22, 1781; and Washington to Lafayette, Headquarters New Windsor, April 22, 1781, LAAR, IV, 55–56, 57, 57n.

197. Washington to Lafayette, Headquarters New Windsor, April, 22, 1781, LAAR, IV, 57.

198. LAAR, IV, 59.

199. Lafayette to George Washington, Camp near Bottom's Creek, May 4, 1781, LAAR, IV, 82.

the voice of a friend, and not the caution of a General." Speaking from recent experience, Greene told Lafayette what to expect when leading men to their deaths against a larger force: "We fight, get beat, rise and fight again. We have a bloody field; but little glory."[200]

Lafayette took Greene's advice. He ordered the Virginia militia to avoid battles and merely annoy the British. He advised Washington that if the French fleet could get into the Chesapeake, the British would be blocked up some river and the odds were ten-to-one that they would be "Ruined."[201] Without naval superiority and with a greatly outnumbered cavalry, Lafayette had to stay on the defensive. He felt confined.

> When I look to the left, there is General Phillips with his army and absolute command of the James River. When I turn to the right, Lord Cornwallis's army is advancing as fast as it can go to devour me, and the worst of the affair is that on looking behind me I see just 900 Continental troops and some militia, sometimes more and sometimes less but never enough not to be completely thrashed by the smallest of the two armies that do me the honor of visiting.

The only help Lafayette could expect was "from my legs, of which I expect to make suitable use."[202] Lafayette desperately needed reinforcements. He called on von Steuben to bring the Virginia militia, the ailing Daniel Morgan to bring his riflemen, and his good friend Anthony Wayne to bring his one thousand Pennsylvania Continentals. He begged the latter to leave the baggage behind and under-

200. Camp near Rugeley's Mill, S.C., May 1, 1781, LAAR, IV, 74.

201. Lafayette to George Washington, Camp near Bottom's Creek, May 4, 1781, LAAR, IV, 82.

202. Lafayette to the Chevalier de La Luzerne, Osborne's, May 9, 1781, LAAR, IV, 89.

take a forced march "for our Relief."[203]

Wayne understood the seriousness of Lafayette's situation. He also knew that his own troops, who had mutinied earlier in New Jersey in January, were on the verge of refusing to march to Virginia.

> There has been a Mutiny in the Pennsylvania Line at York Town, [Pa.] previous to their Marching. Wayne like a good officer quelled it soon as Twelve of the Fellows stepped out & persuaded the Line to refuse to March in Consequence of the Promises made to them not being complied with. Wayne told them of the Disgrace they brought on the American Arms when in Jersey in general & themselves in particular. That the feelings of the Officers on that Occasion were so wounded that they had determined never to experience the like & that he begged they would now fire on him & them or on those Villains in front. He then called to such a Platoon. They presented at the Word, fired and killed six of the Villains. One of the others badly wounded he ordered to be Bayoneted. The Soldier on whom he called to do it, recovered his Piece & said he could not for he was his Comrade. Wayne then drew his Pistol and told him he would kill him. The fellow then advanced and bayoneted him. Wayne then marched the Line by Divisions round the Dead & the rest of the fellows are ordered to be hanged. The Line marched the next Day Southward—Mute as Fish.[204]

203. Lafayette to Anthony Wayne, Camp Wilton, May 15, 1781, LAAR, IV, 103.

204. William Smith Livingston to Samuel Blachley Webb, Beverwick, May 28, 1781, Worthington Chauncey Ford, ed., *Correspondence and Journals of Samuel Blachley Webb* (3 vols., New York, 1893–1894), II, 341–42.

Wayne understood that it was a life and death situation for Lafayette; it was perhaps a life and death situation for the Revolution. He would not let his friend down.

Lafayette now questioned his own judgment and ability. "I shall admit to lack of talent, to lack of experience, and even to both at once."[205] He wanted to attack, but with reinforcements expected, he bided his time. "To Speak truth I Become timid in the same proportion as I become Independent. Had a Superior officer been here, I could have proposed half a dozen of schemes." But now everything depended upon him. "We must chearfully do our best with the little we have."[206] Each day they survived Lafayette viewed as a victory. He wrote the French minister, "We are still alive . . . and so far our little corps has not received the terrible visit." The British infantry outnumbered his by four-to-one; the cavalry by ten-to-one.[207] Lafayette wrote Washington that "had I followed the first Impulsion of my temper, I would have Risked some thing more—but I have been Guarding against my own Warmth, and this consideration that a General defeat which with such a proportion of Militia must be expected would involve this State and our affairs into Ruin, has rendered me Extremely Cautious, More Crippled in my projects than we have been in the Northern States." He found himself "wavering between two Inconveniences. Was I to fight a Battle I'll be Cut to pieces, the Militia dispersed, and the Arms lost. Was I to decline fighting the Country would think Herself given up. I am therefore determined to Skirmish, but not to engage too far, and particularly to take Care against their Immense and excellent Body of

205. To the Vicomte de Noailles, Richmond, May 22, 1781, LAAR, IV, 124.

206. To Nathanael Greene, Camp Wilton on James River, May 18, 1781, LAAR, IV, 111, 113.

207. To the Chevalier de La Luzerne, Richmond, May 22, 1781, LAAR, IV, 120.

Horse whom the Militia fear like they would so Many wild Beasts."[208]

General Phillips died of a fever in mid–May, and Benedict Arnold resumed command. Lafayette refused to receive letters from him. Soon Arnold would return to New York City and Lord Cornwallis would take sole command of the British forces in Virginia. Von Steuben arrived with Virginia militia and Wayne's Pennsylvanians also joined Lafayette's forces evening out the odds a little. More than the sheer numbers, Lafayette really feared Cornwallis's abilities. "This devil Cornwallis is much wiser than the other generals with whom I have dealt. He inspires me with a sincere fear, and his name has greatly troubled my sleep. This campaign is a good school for me. God grant that the public does not pay for my lessons."[209] To the French minister Luzerne, Lafayette wrote that "I would rather be rid of Lord Cornwallis than of a third of his army. He showers me with courtesies, and we wage war like gentlemen; indeed, he is the only gentleman to have commanded the British in America. But after all this, in the end he will give me a thrashing. . . . Fortune will grow tired of protecting us, and when I am quite alone, I shall be beaten."[210] To his close friend General Henry Knox, Washington's commander of artillery, Lafayette wrote that "Lord Cornwallis's Abilities are to me more Alarming than his Superiority of forces. I ever had a Great opinion of Him. Our Papers Call Him a Mad man but was ever any Advantage taken of Him where He commanded in Person? To Speak Plain English, I am Devilish Affraid of Him." Lafayette told Knox that during the 1780 campaign "I was Sighing for Opportunities. This Campaign I was trembling for them, as in the Begining there was no difference between a Scarmish and a Battle, a Battle and a total Defeat.

208. To George Washington, Richmond, May 24, 1781, LAAR, IV, 130, 131.

209. To the Vicomte de Noailles, Williamsburg, July 9, 1781, LAAR, IV, 241.

210. Montok Hill, August 14, 1781, LAAR, IV, 322.

We were so lucky as to Escape an Action, and keep ourselves Clear of that Mounted World that was Gallopping Around us."[211]

To combat Cornwallis, Lafayette developed special strategies. "We never Encamp in a Body, and our Numbers are Much Exaggerated."[212] They avoided navigable rivers and with them British frigates. Camps were often made in hilly woods where the British cavalry was negated and where American weaknesses could be concealed. The riflemen, faces smeared with charcoal, "make the woods resound with their yells; I have made them an army of devils and have given them plenary absolution." "We shall act agreeable to Circumstances but Avoid drawing ourselves into a false Movement which for want of [i.e., lack of] Cavalry and Command of the Rivers would give the Ennemy the Advantage of us. His Lordship [Cornwallis] plays so well that no Blunder can be hoped from Him to Recover a Bad Step of ours."[213] When Cornwallis "moves from one place to another, I try to let my movements give his the appearance of a retreat. Would to God there were a way to give him the appearance of a defeat."[214] "I wish we May Again Induce Him to Run from us least I Should be obliged to Run from Him." Danger was everywhere, but whenever Cornwallis made a move, an American "detachment Marches against them and they generally Retire." Lafayette compared his army to "Children [who] Sing when they are afraid." The old ambition for glory was still there. "The paragraphing Rage does often Seize me, but since I am first in Command I became a Great Coward."[215] He wrote to

211. Forks of the York River, August 18, 1781, LAAR, IV, 332.

212. Lafayette to Nathanael Greene, Camp 20 Miles from Williamsburg, July 4, 1781, LAAR, IV, 231.

213. Lafayette to George Washington, Camp on Pamunkey, August 6, 1781, LAAR, IV, 299.

214. Lafayette to the Chevalier de La Luzerne, Camp near Pamunkey, June 16, 1781, LAAR, IV, 186.

215. To Nathanael Greene, Camp 20 Miles from Williamsburg, July 4, 1781, LAAR, IV, 233, 234. "The Paragraphing Rage" alluded to getting stories about himself printed in the newspapers.

Nathanael Greene, his commanding officer in North Carolina, that "Your Lieutenant is become so wise a Man that his whole Sistem is Bent to Preservation."[216]

The commissary department was as much an enemy as Cornwallis. Lafayette asked Virginia Governor Thomas Nelson to threaten the officers of the commissary with "the Severest punishments in Case the Army is left" without supplies.[217] Every morning he threatened to hang the commissary general. He got "angry five or Six times a day," but stoically persevered. "I do what I Can, but Cannot do what I wish."[218] When the militia numbers fell due to desertions at harvest time, he asked Governor Nelson to raise "a corps of 150 Nigroe pioneers to March with the Army and also a Corps of [a] Hundred Nigroe Waggoners."[219]

Only once did Lafayette fall into a trap laid by Cornwallis. On July 6, after abandoning Williamsburg, Cornwallis prepared to return to his base at Portsmouth. From there he intended to send reinforcements to New York City to help Sir Henry Clinton repel an anticipated attack by Washington and the French forces from Newport. Cornwallis knew that Lafayette, ever eager to pounce upon the British when they were weakest, would attack the British rear guard when they prepared to cross the James River. Cornwallis, however, only sent a legion of cavalry and his baggage across the river, while the rest of his troops lay hidden awaiting the Americans. Lafayette ordered Wayne's Pennsylvanians to attack. At first the Pennsylvanians advanced easily. The obliging British allowed Wayne to be sucked into the trap. When late reconnaissance showed that most of the British had not yet crossed the river,

216. Camp Between the forks of Pamunkey, August 12, 1781, LAAR, IV, 315.

217. Tyree's Plantation, July 1, 1781, LAAR, IV, 230.

218. To Nathanael Greene, Camp 20 Miles from Williamsburg, July 4, 1781, LAAR, IV, 234.

219. Tyree's Plantation, July 1, 1781, LAAR, IV, 229. Pioneers were foot soldiers who built roads preparing the way for the main body of the army.

Lafayette rode with reinforcements to stop Wayne, but it was too late. At about 4:30 the British closed the trap behind Wayne, and the battle erupted. Sensing that a retreat would turn into a panic and standing his ground would end in annihilation, Wayne ordered his eight hundred men to attack the seven thousand British. The shock temporarily stunned the British. A pitched battle occurred as Lafayette ordered Wayne's troops to retire a half mile away where Lafayette had stationed two infantry battalions. As night came on, Cornwallis abandoned the chase. Lafayette and Cornwallis emerged from the battle at Green Spring plantation with added respect for each other.

A general languor spread throughout Virginia after the Green Spring battle. Lafayette hoped that if the New York City attack did not materialize, Washington would lead the French forces into Virginia.[220] He started to prepare a siege to entrap Cornwallis,[221] who decided to move his forces from Portsmouth to Yorktown. On July 30, Washington hinted that a Virginia offensive had been planned. He told Lafayette "You will not therefore regret your stay in Virginia."[222]

In mid-August, it appeared that Cornwallis was about to start a new offensive which Lafayette felt ill prepared to meet. "The two sides pretend to be sleeping, but from a cursory glance I think they will soon awaken. The hot weather in this country is so excessive that one can scarcely operate in the month of August. It has another drawback, and that is illness. Almost all of my men just now are sick with fever. As for me, I have never felt better."[223]

The army suffered from more than ill health. "I can-

220. Two letters to Washington, Malvan Hall, July 20, 1781, LAAR, IV, 255, 261.

221. Lafayette to Governor Thomas Nelson, Malvern Hill, July 30, 1781, LAAR, IV, 284.

222. Headquarters near Dobbs Ferry, July 30, 1781, LAAR, IV, 288.

223. Lafayette to the Prince de Poix, Camp between the branches of York River, August 24, 1781, LAAR, IV, 347.

not conceive what our Commissaries are about."[224] Food, clothing, wagons, ammunition, and supplies of all kind were exhausted. "Spirits are also very Scarce. . . . Unless the Army is Encreased, has arms, and has ammunition, our Resistance will be Inconsiderable."[225] To rifleman commander Daniel Morgan, Lafayette wrote that "I do Every day expect a new Campaign and Never was Worse provided. We put on the Best face we Can. But I Confess I dread Consequences."[226] Then Lafayette received from Washington the news that he was hoping for: that the American and French armies and the French fleet at Newport would soon be on their way to Virginia and that another French fleet of thirty ships under the command of Comte de Grasse was expected soon from the Caribbean. Lafayette was ordered to "immediately take such a position as will best enable you to prevent [Cornwallis's] sudden retreat thro' North Carolina." A small detachment was being sent immediately to reinforce Lafayette who was told to continue "that prudence and good conduct which you have manifested thro' the whole of your Campaign."[227]

Admiral de Grasse arrived off the Virginia Capes on August 29, 1781, and put ashore 3,200 French infantry to serve under Lafayette's command. One week later Admiral Graves arrived with a smaller British fleet. In the ensuing battle that lasted several days, Graves's fleet was severely damaged and retreated to New York City. The French fleet then arrived from Newport carrying huge siege guns and provisions. Washington and Rochambeau joined Lafayette

224. Lafayette to Governor Thomas Nelson, Camp Forks of York River, August 16, 1781, LAAR, IV, 331.

225. Lafayette to George Weedon, Camp Between the forks of York River, August 15, 1781, LAAR, IV, 325.

226. Montok Hill, August 15, 1781, LAAR, IV, 323.

227. Headquarters Dobbs's Ferry, August 15, 1781, LAAR, IV, 330. On August 21, Washington wrote Lafayette that the French and American armies "are now in Motion. . . . Our March will be continued with all the Dispatch that our Circumstances will admit." Headquarters, Kings Ferry, LAAR, IV, 340.

in Williamsburg on September 14 and about two weeks later the last of the allied troops arrived.

Lafayette's men checked several attempts by Cornwallis to escape by land and sea. The siege of Yorktown began on September 28 and the bombardment commenced on October 9. On October 14 two outer British fortifications—Redoubts 9 and 10—were captured. On October 17 Cornwallis asked for terms and the formal surrender of the 7,000-man army occurred two days later.

Lafayette had three major concerns as he awaited the French and American armies. He had to block any escape by Cornwallis and he had to feed and equip his army and the French infantrymen from de Grasse's fleet. Lafayette threatened Governor Thomas Nelson that if the Virginia commissary did not do its job, Cornwallis might escape to North Carolina only to return when the French fleets and Washington and Rochambeau left. Virginia would then be ravaged.[228] Lafayette's third concern was the eagerness of de Grasse and the Marquis de St. Simon, the commander of de Grasse's infantry, to attack Cornwallis before Washington and Rochambeau arrived. Lafayette knew that Major General Benjamin Lincoln accompanied Washington. Lincoln, who had been captured at Charleston, S.C., and then exchanged, outranked Lafayette and would thus take command of the American forces in Virginia. By attacking before Lincoln's arrival, Lafayette could achieve the glory he had long sought. Even with an army that approached ten thousand, however, Lafayette preferred "the Cautious line of Conduct I have of late Adopted." He would preach "patience as our affairs cannot be Spoiled unless we do Spoil them ourselves."[229] Washington responded "that your ideas on every occasion have been so consonant to my own, and . . . by your Military dispositions &

228. Ruffin's Ferry, August 30, 1781, LAAR, IV, 370–71.

229. To George Washington, Holt's Forge, September 1, 1781, LAAR, IV, 381, 382.

prudent Measures you have anticipated all my wishes."[230] Lafayette was willing graciously to step aside for Lincoln, however, he asked Washington for one favor: that the division that Lafayette would command under Lincoln "be composed of the troops which have gone through the fatigues and dangers of the Virginia Campaign. This will be the Greatest Reward of the Services I May have rendered, as I Confess I have the Strongest attachment to those troops."[231]

When Washington and Rochambeau arrived Cornwallis was put under siege. In ritualistic fashion, the siege followed a certain pattern. To advance their line of attack, the allied armies would have to capture two outer fortifications. Lafayette was given the responsibility of capturing Redoubt 10 on the right flank. Passions were high. As a diversionary tactic, Benedict Arnold on September 6 had captured Fort Griswold near New London in his home state of Connecticut. The British hoped that Washington would abandon the march south, try to retake the fort, and capture Arnold. After the last of the fort's defenders surrendered, their British captors killed them in cold blood. As Lafayette's troops prepared for the assault on Redoubt 10—with no bullets; only sabers and bayonets were allowed—they promised revenge. Lafayette and Alexander Hamilton, Lafayette's second in command, brilliantly led the assault, captured the redoubt, and spared all of those who surrendered. After the assault, Lafayette said that his feelings had never "been so gratified as they were on the 14th in the evening, when the American light infantry in sight of the Armies of France, America, and England, stormed a redoubt Sword in hand, and proved themselves equal in this business to the Grenadiers of the best troops in Europe."[232]

230. Headquarters, Head of Elk, September 7, 1781, LAAR, IV, 390.

231. Camp Williamsburg, September 9, 1781, LAAR, IV, 395.

232. To Samuel Cooper, Camp near the York River, October 26, 1781, LAAR , IV, 431.

After Cornwallis surrendered, Lafayette tried to convince de Grasse to transport him and his detachment to attack Wilmington, North Carolina, and then Savannah, Georgia. De Grasse refused because he was already late in returning to the Caribbean and he feared being accosted at sea by a British fleet while overloaded with men and materiel. His slower, more cumbersome vessels would have little chance. He also doubted the seaworthiness of his ships on the open seas if overloaded. Lafayette wrote that he would "never forgive the old Admiral for having so suddenly overthrown our plan.[233]

With no other prospects for action before winter encampment, Lafayette asked Congress for a furlough to return to France. Congress readily gave its permission and profusely thanked Lafayette for his service in Virginia that was characterized by "his judgment, vigilance, gallantry, and address." Congress ordered the Secretary for Foreign Affairs to instruct the American ministers in France to cooperate with Lafayette in diplomatic, commercial, and fiscal matters. The American frigate *Alliance* was made available to Lafayette and the captain was instructed to avoid all engagement with the enemy while transporting Lafayette back to France.[234] Lafayette thanked Congress for its generous statements and assured the delegates that "at every time, in every part of the World my Heart will be panting for opportunities to be employed in her Service."[235]

Not expecting to see Lafayette before he returned north, Washington, at his Mount Vernon home for the first time in five years, wrote Lafayette to wish him "a propitious voyage—a gracious reception from your Prince—an honorable reward of your Services—a happy meeting with

233. To Nathanael Greene, Philadelphia, November 22, 1781, LAAR, IV, 438.

234. Resolutions of Congress, November 23, 1781, LAAR, IV, 440–41.

235. Philadelphia, November 25, 1781, LAAR, IV, 441.

your lady & friends—and a safe return in the Spring."[236] As the *Alliance* prepared to sail, Lafayette wrote an adieu to Washington.

> I know your Heart so well that I am sure no distance can alter your attachment 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.[237]

Lafayette was leaving the praise and adoration of one nation and going home to that of another. Minister of War the Marquis de Ségur told Lafayette that "our old warriors admire you; the young ones want to take you as a model, without, however, your having excited among them the least impulse of jealousy. You add to perfect conduct a modesty that enhances the value of your virtues."[238]

## LOBBYING AT HOME

After a voyage of twenty-three days, Lafayette arrived in France a national hero. Viewed as a young composite of George Washington and Benjamin Franklin, Lafayette was the embodiment of the American Revolution. Everywhere he went, he was celebrated, and he consistently used his fame as an advocate for American interests. In dealing with the various French ministers, he sought trade concessions, financial considerations, military assistance, and closer

236. Mount Vernon, November 15, 1781, LAAR, IV, 437.
237. *Alliance* off Boston, December 21, 1781, LAAR, IV, 450.
238. Versailles, December 5, 1781, LAAR, IV, 447.

diplomatic ties. He visited Spain to soften the aloofness of that country toward America. He sent a letter of credit to his dear friend Henry Laurens, imprisoned in England after he was captured while en route to the peace negotiations in Paris.[239] He offered assistance to the American peace commissioners in negotiating the treaty that would end the war and confirm American independence. In all matters, "When my advice is asked for, no Court, no Country, no Consideration can induce me to advise a thing that is not consistent with the dignity of the United States."[240] He considered himself "a Political Aid de Camp"[241] to every American diplomat abroad, and when appropriate wore his American major general's uniform to accentuate his commitment to America. Franklin, Jay, and Adams all wrote to Lafayette and to Congress advising him to postpone his return to America to continue lobbying in Europe. "Duty and Inclination," Lafayette wrote, urged him to return to America, but he stayed in Europe longer than he had expected.[242] As his friend the Comte de Ségur, son of the minister of war, prepared to return to America, he wrote Lafayette that he faced more difficult work in Europe dealing with "English arrogance, stupid Spanish vanity, French inconsistency, and despotic ignorance. You will see that the cabinet tries one's patience as much as a battlefield, and that as many stupid things are done in a negotiation as in a campaign." But Ségur knew that Lafayette would succeed because "you have genius and good fortune. To have that is to have half again as much as it takes to be a great man."[243]

Militarily, Lafayette was named second in command and quartermaster general for a planned 20,000 man, fifty-

239. Lafayette to Laurens, Paris, April 14, 1782, LAAR, V, 30.

240. To John Jay, Madrid, February 15, 1783, LAAR, V, 96.

241. Lafayette to the President of Congress, Paris, January 29, 1782, Lafayette to John Jay, Madrid, February 15, 1783, LAAR, V, 6, 96.

242. Lafayette to George Washington, St. Germain, June 25, 1782, LAAR, V, 48–50.

243. Rochefort, July 7, 1782, LAAR, V, 51.

ship joint Franco-Spanish campaign against Jamaica during the winter of 1782. After capturing Jamaica, Lafayette was to invade Canada via the St. Lawrence River. Though he was to re-enter the French army as a marechal de camp, he was intent on "keep[ing] my American Uniform." On "the out Side as Well as the Inside" he would always be "an American Soldier. I will Conduct Matters, and take Commands as an officer Borrowed from the United States." He would, however, "Watch for the Happy Moment when I may join Our Beloved Colours."[244] The campaign was canceled with the news that a preliminary peace treaty had been signed. Immediately Lafayette had the great joy of sending a copy of the preliminary treaty to America in a speedy French frigate named *Le Triomphe*.[245] He asked Congress if they would grant him the "Honorary Commission" of hand delivering America's approval of the peace treaty to Great Britain and he also recommended that Alexander Hamilton be appointed America's minister plenipotentiary to Britain.[246]

With independence, Lafayette hoped that Americans would work to create a strong, permanent union among the states and "that our Articles of Confederation ought to be Revised, and Measures Immediately taken to Envigorate the Continental Union."[247] He called for a constitutional convention to meet in the fall, presided over by Washington to "Devise upon Amendments to" strengthen Congress and reduce the power of the states. Lafayette would "be Happy to be" one of the delegates to such a convention.[248] He wrote Washington encouraging him to use his influence to induce

244. Lafayette to George Washington, Paris, October 24, 1782, LAAR, V, 65.

245. Lafayette to the President of Congress, Cadiz, February 5, 1783, LAAR, V, 85.

246. Ibid., 89–90. Congress decided that it was best not to send Lafayette with its approval of the peace treaty to Great Britain. The British might view this as "an insulting step." LAAR, V, 93n.

247. Ibid.

248. Lafayette to Secretary for Foreign Affairs Robert R. Livingston, Cadiz, February 5, 1783, LAAR, V, 88–89.

> the people of America to Strengthen their foederal Union. It is a Work in which it Behoves You to be concerned. I look upon it as a Necessary Measure. Depend upon it, My dear General, that European Politics will be apt to create divisions among the states. Now is the time when the Powers of Congress must be fixed, the Boundaries Determined—and Articles of Confederation Revised. It is a Work in which Every Well Wisher to America must desire to be concerned. It is the finishing Stroke that is Wanting to the Perfection of the temple of Liberty.[249]

Washington responded that "we now stand an Independent People, and have yet to learn political Tactics. We are placed among the Nations of the Earth, and have a character to establish; but how we shall acquit ourselves time must discover." He felt "that we shall be guilty of many blunders in treading this boundless theatre before we shall have arrived at any perfection in this Art." Washington would offer his "aid as far as it can be rendered in the private walks of life; for hence forward my Mind shall be unbent; & I will endeavor to glide gently down the stream of life till I come to that abyss, from whence no traveller is permitted to return."[250]

Washington told Lafayette that he agreed to a plan that Lafayette had proposed to emancipate some slaves and buy a plantation for them in western Virginia. Such a plan, Lafayette had suggested, would show that free blacks could sustain themselves and would be a public statement by Washington that he favored emancipation. Washington said that the details would have to be worked out when Lafayette next visited America.[251] No details were worked

249. Lafayette to Washington, Cadiz, February 5, 1783, LAAR, V, 92.

250. Headquarters, Newburgh, April 5, 1783, LAAR, V, 119.

251. Lafayette to Washington, Cadiz, February 5, 1783; and Washington to Lafayette, Headquarters, Newburgh, April 5, 1788, LAAR, V, 91–92, 121.

out. Nowhere is it recorded that the two men discussed the project when Lafayette visited Mount Vernon in 1784. Lafayette, however, wrote Washington in 1786 "that I have purchased for a Hundred and twenty five thousand French livres a plantation in the Colony of Cayenne [in the French West Indies] and am going to free my Negroes in order to Make that Experiment which you know is My Hobby Horse."[252]

## THE PEACETIME VISIT TO AMERICA

Lafayette yearned to visit America after the peace. I "am Panting for the Moment when I may again enjoy the Sight of the American Shores."[253] He first, however, visited Madrid, hoping to get Spain to recognize the independence of the United States. It was ironic, Lafayette thought, that England would recognize America's independence before the Spanish did.[254] Lafayette greatly enjoyed the role of America's ambassador at large. "Never shall I more glory, and Better Enjoy Myself than in the title of an Essential Servant to the United States." He wrote Washington that "No Season of the Year, no Impediment in the World can prevent My flying to a Beloved Country whose Happiness, Glory, and liberty, are dearer to me than my own life."[255] "Oh that I were at Mount Vernon, by the side of My dear General, reminding him of his past labours, and their glorious happy conclusion! It Melts my Heart, only to think of it. I feel Uneasy."[256] He asked Washington to "often

252. Lafayette to Washington, Paris, February 6, 1786, W. W. Abbot, ed., *The Papers of George Washington, Confederation Series*, III, 544.

253. Lafayette to the President of Congress, Cadiz, February 5, 1783, and Lafayette to Secretary for Foreign Affairs Robert R. Livingston, Cadiz, February 5, 1783, LAAR, V, 85, 88.

254. Lafayette to William Carmichael, Cadiz, January 20, 1783, LAAR, V, 81.

255. Nancy, September 8, 1783, LAAR, V, 153.

256. Paris, November 11, 1783, LAAR, V, 164.

Remember your Adopted Son."[257]

While awaiting the opportune time to visit America, he asked William Temple Franklin, Benjamin Franklin's grandson, to obtain for him a printed copy of the Declaration of Independence. He planned to have a French scribe engrave it "in Golden letters" and then display it in his bedchambers in a double frame. The empty half of the frame was reserved for a similar such French declaration. "When I wish to put myself in Spirits, I will look at it, and most Voluptuously Read it over."[258]

Lafayette decided to visit "my Beloved shores of liberty" in the Spring of 1784.[259] He explained to John Adams that he had first come to America for the Revolution, "Now I am Going for the people, and My Motives are, that I love them, and they love me."[260] While riding toward the French coast for the trip to America, he wrote his wife that he felt the pangs of a traveler. He was far enough away from America so that he could not "yet feel the pleasure of seeing my friends there again while I leave here those I love best."[261] On June 29, he left France aboard the French packetboat the *Courier de New York*, and, after a thirty-five-day voyage "without incident," arrived in New York City on August 4. For the next four months Lafayette visited wartime friends and was feted throughout the country

"After reveling" two days in New York City, Lafayette traveled southward, arriving at Mount Vernon on August 17, a couple of days earlier than Washington had expected. Their meeting was "very tender and our satisfaction completely mutual." Lafayette described his week-long stay with the General. "After breakfast the general and I

257. Chavaniac in the Province of Auvergne, July 22, 1783, LAAR, V, 146.

258. Lafayette to William Temple Franklin, Paris, November 19, 1783, LAAR, V, 165.

259. Lafayette to Henry Knox, Paris, January 8, 1784, LAAR, V, 187.

260. Paris, April 9, 1784, LAAR, V, 214.

261. La Flêche, June 20, 1784, LAAR, V, 227.

chat together for some time. After having thoroughly discussed the past, the present, and the future, he withdraws to take care of his affairs and gives me things to read that have been written during my absence. Then we come down for dinner and find Mrs. Washington with visitors from the neighborhood. The conversation at table turns to the events of the war or to anecdotes that we are fond of recalling. After tea we resume our private conversations and pass the rest of the evening with the family."[262] Lafayette was enchanted with Mount Vernon. To him it seemed that the Potomac River "was expressly created" for Mount Vernon. Lafayette left Mount Vernon on September 1 and traveled to New England, while Washington visited his western land holdings. The two planned to meet again two months later.

In Baltimore, Lafayette met James Madison, who joined him on the journey north as far as New York City. "Wherever he passes," Madison wrote, Lafayette "receives the most flattering tokens of sincere affection from all ranks."[263] Three states—Connecticut, Maryland, and Virginia—granted citizenship to Lafayette, his son, and their descendants.

Lafayette was encouraged to press on to Fort Stanwix to assist American commissioners in negotiating a treaty with Huron and Iroquois chiefs. Madison and Barbé de Marbois, the French chargé d'affaires, accompanied Lafayette to Fort Stanwix and beyond on an arduous journey to the chief village of the friendly Oneida. While the others in the party struggled through "heat, cold, drought, humidity, and the inclemencies of the seasons," Lafayette seemed "impervious." "To protect himself against the rain, he had brought along an overcoat of gummed taffeta which had been wrapped in newspapers that had stuck to the

262. Lafayette to Adrienne de Lafayette, Mount Vernon, August 20, 1784, LAAR, V, 237.

263. To Thomas Jefferson, Philadelphia, September 7, 1784, LAAR, V, 241.

gum. There had been no time to pull them off, and the curious could read on his arm or his back the *Courrier de Europe* or the news from various places."[264]

Lafayette immediately assumed the role of "father" to the forty chiefs and warriors present. Being a Frenchman, whom the Indians of the area always preferred to the British, and as former American commander at Albany who had warned the Indians to ally with the Americans in their pursuit of independence, gave Lafayette cachet. He addressed the Indians with a speech "that was well composed, with the grace and nobility that you know in him."[265] He congratulated those who had allied with America and chastised those who had raised "their hatchets" against Americans during the war. He advised all of them to join together around the fire [and] conclude reasonable bargains" with the Americans concerning trade and land purchases.[266] Lafayette, according to Madison, "was the only conspicuous figure" at the meeting; "the commissioners were eclipsed."[267] The chiefs responded with "great promises." Having played a major role in restoring peace in upstate New York, Lafayette was eager to return to civilization "because all this savagery, despite my popularity, bores me to death, and my little bark hut is about as comfortable as a taffeta suit in the month of January."[268]

After Lafayette and Madison parted, Madison recorded his impressions of the Marquis in an encoded letter to Thomas Jefferson.

264. Barbé de Marbois's Journal of His Visit to the Territory of the Six Nations, September 23, 1784, LAAR, V, 247.

265. Ibid., 252. See also James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, Philadelphia, October 17, 1784, LAAR, V, 272.

266. Account of Lafayette's Meeting with the Six Nations, October 3–4, 1784, LAAR, V, 256.

267. James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, Philadelphia, October 17, 1784, *Madison Papers*, VIII, 120.

268. To Adrienne de Lafayette, Fort Schuyler, October 4, 1784, LAAR, V, 261.

> The time I have lately passed with the M. has given me a pretty thorough insight into his character. With great natural frankness of temper he unites much address with very considerable talents, a strong thirst of praise and popularity. In his politics he says his three hobby horses are the alliance between France and the United States, the union of the latter and the manumission of the slaves. The two former are the dearer to him as they are connected with his personal glory. The last does him real honor as it is a proof of his humanity. In a word I take him to be as amiable a man as can be imagined and as sincere an American as any Frenchman can be; one whose past services gratitude obliges us to acknowledge, and whose future friendship prudence requires us to cultivate.[269]

Jefferson responded from his new diplomatic post in France. "Your character of the M. Fayette is precisely agreeable to the idea I had formed of him. I take him to be of unmeasured ambition but that the means he uses are virtuous. He is returned [to France from America] fraught with affection to America and disposed to render every possible service."[270] Upon further reflection, Madison amended his opinion of Lafayette.

> Subsequent to the date of mine in which I gave my idea of Fayette I had further opportunities of penetrating his character. Though his foibles did not disappear all the favorable traits presented themselves in a stronger light. On closer inspection he certainly possesses talents which might figure in any line. If he is ambitious it is rather of the praise which virtue dedicates to merit than of the homage which fear renders to power. His dispo-

269. Philadelphia, October 17, 1784, *Madison Papers*, VIII, 120–21.
270. Paris, March 18, 1785, LAAR, V, 274n.

> sition is naturally warm and affectionate and his attachment to the United States unquestionable. Unless I am grossly deceived you will find his zeal sincere & useful whenever it can be employed in behalf of the United States without opposition to the essential interests of France.[271]

From Fort Stanwix Lafayette visited Albany, Hartford, Boston, Portsmouth, N.H., and Newport before returning to Virginia on the French frigate *Nymphe* provided by Vergennes. One final visit to Mount Vernon, and then on to Richmond, Annapolis, and Baltimore, and then to Trenton, New Jersey, where Congress sat. "No Words," Lafayette wrote, could describe the receptions. "At least it is Impossible to Express what I have felt."[272] He was treated as "if he was a Crown'd head."[273]

In Richmond Lafayette assisted James, a slave of William Armistead, in his quest for freedom. James had served in the Revolution as an aide to Lafayette as well as a spy risking his life to supply critical information during the Virginia campaign. The slow-acting Virginia legislature freed James two years later and subsequently granted him a pension. Grateful, the freedman took the name James Armistead Lafayette.[274]

After visiting Annapolis with Washington, where they attended a reception given by the Assembly, a banquet, and a ball, the two dear friends parted. Washington wondered whether it would be the last time they would see each other. "In the moment of our separation upon the road as I traveled, and every hour since—I felt all that love, respect & attachment for you, with which length of years,

271. To Thomas Jefferson, Orange, August 20, 1785, *Madison Papers*, VIII, 345.

272. To Alexander Hamilton, Boston, October 22, 1784, LAAR, V, 275.

273. Joseph Barrell to Samuel Blachley Webb, Boston, October 21, 1784, *Webb Correspondence,* III, 40.

274. LAAR, V, 278–79.

close connexion & 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."[275] Washington's fears were borne out.

On December 9, 1784, seven years after receiving a cool reception by the Second Continental Congress, a grand committee of the Confederation Congress chaired by John Jay addressed Lafayette. The committee thanked Lafayette for his service to America both here and in Europe. He had always acted as "a patriotic citizen." Congress and all of America regarded "him with particular affection, and will not cease to feel an interest in whatever may concern his honor and prosperity, and that their best and kindest wishes will always attend him."[276] The next day, Congress ordered the War Department to present Lafayette with one of the standards of Cornwallis captured at Yorktown "as a testimonial of the high sense Congress entertain of the great bravery and prowess evinced on many occasions by the Marquis particularly during the siege of Yorktown, by carrying, sword in hand with the American column of troops which he commanded in person [against] one of the enemy's redoubts, completely garrisoned, and in an entire state of Military defense."[277] Congress could bestow no higher honor upon the Marquis.

On December 11, 1784, Lafayette became the first foreigner to address Congress.[278] Attempting to hold back tears of emotion, he said that he lacked the "words to Express the feelings of his Heart." He thanked General Washington, who had faith in "an Unexperienced Youth" and who treated him as an adoptive son. He thanked

275. Mount Vernon, December 8, 1784, LAAR, V, 279.

276. LAAR, V, 281n.

277. Resolution of Congress, December 10, 1784, LAAR, V, 281n.

278. Except for Lafayette himself in 1825, a century and a half would elapse before another foreigner addressed Congress, when Winston Churchill would do so during World War II.

"Congress, the States, the people at large, [and particularly] . . . the dear Military Companions to whose Services their Country is so much Indebted." He thanked France and King Louis for the assistance offered America and he cherished the alliance that riveted the two countries together. He delighted in seeing Americans desire a strengthening of the Confederation and a stronger Congress. In closing, Lafayette hoped that

> this immense temple of freedom [may] ever stand a lesson to oppressors, an example to the oppressed, a sanctuary for the rights of mankind! and may these happy United States attain that complete splendor and prosperity which will illustrate the blessings of their government, and for ages to come rejoice the departed souls of its founders. However unwilling to trespass on your time, I must yet present you with grateful thanks for the late favors of Congress, and never can they oblige me so much as when they put it in my power, in every part of the world, to the latest day of my life, to gratify the attachment which will ever rank me among the most zealous and respectful servants of the United States.[279]

On December 23, 1784, Lafayette left America. He was not to return for forty years.

## RETURNING TO FRANCE

After a thirty-day passage, Lafayette safely returned to France. He immediately resumed his lobbying efforts in favor of America. He urged the Spanish to open the Mississippi River to American navigation, encouraged Frederick the Great of Prussia and Emperor Joseph II of

279. Speech before Congress, Trenton, December 11, 1784, LAAR, V, 280–81.

the Holy Roman Empire to enter into commercial treaties with America, supported an American led multinational naval force to attack the Barbary pirates, sought further French trade concessions in Europe and in the West Indies, and promoted a system of educational exchanges between the young men of France and America. He opened his house to American visitors and held a weekly American salon for Americans and friends of America. He offered financial and other assistance to Americans having difficulties. One such example is noteworthy.

Lafayette and Henry Knox, the new Confederation secretary at war and formerly Washington's commander of artillery, were close friends. While traveling in Europe, Henry's brother William had disappeared. Lafayette tried to locate him. He finally received word that "Billy" had suffered a nervous breakdown and had been in a British insane asylum for five months. He seemed to be recovering and might be released soon. Immediately Lafayette readied to go to England to make sure that Billy was being properly cared for or to bring him to France. With his presence, however, Lafayette knew the British press would make a circus of Billy's unfortunate condition. Consequently, Lafayette sent "a Most Intelligent and trusty Person in My family to Wait on Your Brother, See Him well attended in Every Respect, and when He is permitted to Go abroad Accompany Him to My House." If needed, Lafayette would go to England under a fictitious name to check on Billy. "What I have most Recommended is not to Hurry the treatment, and to Wait untill the phicisians think proper." When Billy had sufficiently recovered, Lafayette intended to move him to his family chateau in Auvergne where Billy could fully recover.[280]

John Jay, now the Confederation secretary for foreign affairs, thanked Lafayette for all of his efforts on behalf of America.

280. Lafayette to Henry Knox, Chavaniac, Auvergne, June 12, 1785, LAAR, V, 329–30.

> I can easily conceive that, at the German courts you visited, you have done us service, because I know how able, as well as how willing, you are to do it. I wish all who speak and write of us were equally well-informed and well-disposed. It is a common remark in this country that wherever you go you do us good. For my part, I give you credit, not merely for doing us good, but also for doing it uniformly, constantly, and upon system.[281]

Thomas Jefferson, now Franklin's successor as minister to France, wrote that

> The Marquis de Lafayette is a most valuable auxiliary to me. His zeal is unbounded, & his weight with those in power great. His education having been merely military, commerce was an unknown field to him. But his good sense enabling him to comprehend perfectly whatever is explained to him his agency has been very efficacious. He has a great deal of sounder genius, is well remarked by the king & rising in popularity. [The king] has nothing against him but the suspicion [of] republican principles. I think he will one day be of the ministry. His foible is a canine appetite for popularity and fame. But he will get above this.[282]

Despite this widespread praise of Lafayette, some Americans had suspicions about Lafayette's "unlimited ambition." Matthew Ridley, appointed by Maryland to procure loans from bankers in France and the Netherlands, found Lafayette "meddling in the Affairs of Peace. He is contin-

281. New York, June 16, 1786, Henry P. Johnston, ed., *The Correspondence and Public Papers of John Jay* (4 vols., New York, 1891), III, 201–2.

282. To James Madison, Paris, January 30, 1787, *Madison Papers* IX, 250.

ually inquisitive as to what is passing. . . . he is a politician who seeks to profit of time and Circumstances in order to advance himself in France. Full of Ambition and not without Intrigue."[283] Massachusetts Congressman Samuel Osgood felt that Lafayette "has zealously interested himself in all our important Matters. He assumes the Language of a true born American, & is a very popular Character in the Country. But if I Mistake not he is deeply immersed in European Politicks, which are the worst that can possibly exist for America."[284] John Adams warned his good friend James Warren that

> The Marquis de la Fayette is an amiable Nobleman and has great Merit. I enjoy his Friendship and wish a Continuance of it; But I will conceal nothing from you. I see in that Youth the seeds of Mischief to our Country if we do not take Care.
>
> He was taken early into our Service and placed in an high Command, in which he has behaved well, but he has gained more applause than human nature at twenty-five can bear. It has enkindled in him an unbounded Ambition which it concerns Us much to watch. . . .
>
> The Marquis may live these fifty years. Ten years may bring him by the order of Succession to the Command of your Army. You have given him a great deal too much of Popularity in our own Country. He is connected with a Family of vast Influence in France. He rises fast in the French Army. He may be soon in the Ministry. This Mongrel Character of French Patriot and American Patriot cannot exist long, and if hereafter it should be seriously the Politicks of the French Court to

283. Herbert E. Klingelhofer, ed., "Matthew Ridley's Diary During the Peace Negotiations of 1782," *William and Mary Quarterly,* 3rd ser. XX (January 1963), 107.

284. To John Adams, Annapolis, December 7, 1783, Smith, *Letters,* XXI, 195.

> break our Union, Imagination cannot conceive a more Proper Instrument for the Purpose than the Marquis. He is now very active, everlastingly busy, ardent to distinguish himself every Way, especially to increase his Merit towards America, aiming as I believe at some Employment from Congress. Pains are taken to give him the Credit of every Thing. Believe me it is of infinite Importance that you yourselves and your Servants should have the Reputation of their own Measures and of doing your Service.[285]

Abigail Adams seemingly caught the infectious suspicion from her husband. "The Marquis . . . is dangerously amiable, sensible, polite, affible insinuating pleasing hospitable indefatigable and ambitious. Let our Country Guard let them watch let them fear his virtues and remember that the summit of perfection is the point of declension."[286] When leaving France to accompany her husband as minister to Great Britain, Abigail was sorry to leave Lafayette. "I shall lose part and the greatest part of American intelligence by quitting France, for no person is so well informed from all the states as the Marquis de la Fayette. He has Established a correspondence in all the states and has the News Papers from every quarter."[287]

Jefferson was pleased that Virginia had made Lafayette a citizen, but he felt the state should also make a gift of land to him. It would make Americans look grateful and it might be needed by Lafayette sometime in the not too distant future as "an useful asylum."

285. Paris, April 16, 1783, *Warren-Adams Letters: Being chiefly a correspondence among John Adams, Samuel Adams, and James Warren* (2 vols., Boston, 1917, 1925), II, 213–14.

286. To Mercy Otis Warren, Auteuil, France, May 10, 1785, Richard Alan Ryerson et al., eds., *Adams Family Correspondence* (Cambridge, Mass., 1993), VI, 139.

287. To Mary Smith Cranch, Auteuil, France, May 8, 1785, ibid., 120.

> The time of life at which he visited America was too well adapted to receive good & lasting impressions to permit him ever to accommodate himself to the principles of monarchical government; and it will need all his own prudence & that of his friends to make this country a safe residence for him. How glorious, how comfortable in reflection will it be to have prepared a refuge for him in case of a reverse. In the mean time he could settle it with tenants from the freest part of this country, Bretagny. I have never suggested the smallest idea of this kind to him: because the execution of it should convey the first notice.[288]

Lafayette himself had acknowledged that despite his popularity in Paris and throughout France, "amongst the Great folks I have a large party Against me, because they are jealous of my Reputation."[289] Jefferson saw that Lafayette's "education in our school has drawn on him a very jealous eye from a court whose principles are the most absolute despotism."[290]

## THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Lafayette immediately took part in the early stirrings of the French Revolution. He was elected to the Assembly of Notables that convened at Versailles on February 22, 1787. With Jefferson offering confidential advice, Lafayette wrote the Declaration of Rights that was submitted to the Assembly. He was appointed commandant general of the National Guard of Paris on July 15, 1789 and ordered the

288. To James Madison, Paris, February 8, 1786, *Madison Papers*, VIII, 488.

289. Lafayette to George Washington, Paris, March 9, 1784, *Washington Papers, Confederation Series,* I, 185.

290. To Edward Carrington, Paris, January 16, 1787, Julian P. Boyd et al., eds., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson* (Princeton, 1950–), XI, 48.

demolition of the Bastille as the "fortress of despotism." He sent an engraving of the demolished prison along with the key to the main gate to Washington. "It is," he wrote, "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."[291] Lafayette entrusted the drawing and the key to Thomas Paine, who planned on returning to America. When those plans changed, Paine forwarded the key and the engraving to Washington as "the first ripe fruits of American principles transplanted into Europe to his Master and Patron." Paine wrote Washington that when Lafayette asked him to deliver these symbols, "my heart leaped with Joy—It is something so truly in character that no remarks can illustrate it, and is more happily expressive of his remembrance of his American friends than any letters can convey. That the principles of America opened the Bastille is not to be doubted, and therefore the Key comes to the right place."[292]

As commander of the national guard of Paris, Lafayette helped to control the restless mob and protected the royal family. When, against his direct orders, the guard fired upon and killed people in an angry mob demanding the abdication of the king, Lafayette's popularity waned amid mounting criticism. With the outbreak of war between France and Austria and Prussia, Lafayette was promoted to lieutenant general in the army. He resigned from the National Guard of Paris on September 30, 1791, and was appointed general in chief of the Army of Flanders on March 20, 1792. After victories at Philippville, Maubeurge, and Florennes, he was proscribed by the newly ascendant Jacobins in August 1792.[293] While trying to escape with his

291. Lafayette to George Washington, Paris, March 17, 1790, *Washington Papers, Presidential Series,* V, 242.

292. May 1, 1790, *Washington Papers, Presidential Papers,* V, 369. The key and the engraving still hang on the wall at Mount Vernon.

293. To proscribe is to publish the name of a person as condemned to death with his property forfeited to the state.

staff to Holland, he was captured and arrested at Rochefort by the Prussians and interned in five different prisons before being turned over to the Austrians and imprisoned in the fortress at Olmütz. He was not released until September 19, 1797, after Napoleon defeated the Austrians and signed the treaty of Campo Formio.

While Lafayette was in an Austrian prison, his wife and daughters were imprisoned in Paris along with Adrienne's mother, grandmother, and sister. His son, George Washington Lafayette was sent to America. Adrienne wrote President Washington: "I send you my son. . . . It is with deep and sincere confidence that I entrust this dear child to the protection of the United States (which he has long regarded as his second country and which I have long regarded as our sanctuary)."[294] Secretary of War Henry Knox, in Boston at the time, wrote Washington that Lafayette's son and tutor had arrived incognito. He "is a lovely young man, of excellent morals and conduct."[295] As president, Washington felt that it might be diplomatically compromising to accept the boy into his family when his parents were in extreme disfavor with the rulers of France. The French minister to America was sounded out about the matter and responded that "France did not make war upon women & children." After a couple months in Cambridge, Mass., Lafayette's son joined Alexander Hamilton in New York City. Washington told Hamilton that the matter was to be left for him to decide. Hamilton responded that there were probably no serious problems with Washington accepting the young Lafayette into the President's mansion. On February 28, Washington invited young Lafayette and his tutor to visit him in Philadelphia. In early March the U.S. House of Representatives introduced a resolution offering the young Lafayette protection. After the initial fuss subsided, Washington on March

294. Adrienne de Lafayette to George Washington, Unger, *Lafayette,* 307.

295. Boston, September 2, 1795, *Hamilton Papers*, XIX, 325.

31 again invited his godson to Philadelphia. In mid-April 1796, Washington welcomed the young Frenchman into his Philadelphia house for the last days of his presidency. When Washington retired, the young Lafayette accompanied him to Mount Vernon, staying until October 1797 when he returned to France hoping to be reunited with his family.

U.S. minister to France James Monroe obtained the release of Adrienne and her daughters, but was too late to save her mother, grandmother, and sister from the guillotine. After several months during which Adrienne regained possession of her family estate at La Grange, about seventy-five miles east of Paris, Adrienne and the girls joined Lafayette in prison in Olmütz, where they all suffered horribly. After their release, Lafayette was welcomed back to France if he would swear allegiance to the new government under Napoleon. When he refused, the government confiscated the last of his estate in Brittainy, leaving him an exiled pauper. The family resided at Wittmoid in Holstein until the end of 1799 when they returned to La Grange. In February 1798 Lafayette's son rejoined the family. He had not seen his father in six years. Washington wrote Lafayette that with this letter, he would be reunited with his son, "who is worthy in every way to be your son . . . . The conduct of your son since he set foot on American soil has been exemplary and has earned him the trust of all who have had the pleasure of knowing him." Washington also told Lafayette "that at no time have you ranked higher in the esteem of this nation." The hearts of all Americans "are filled with affection and admiration for" him and his family.[296] Lafayette was ecstatic with the return of his son. He wrote his aunt, "I can assure you we are more than pleased with him. He is perfect physically; tall, with a noble and charming face. His temperament is all that we could wish. He has the same kind heart that you remember, and his

296. Washington to Lafayette, Mount Vernon, October 8, 1797, quoted in Unger, *Lafayette,* 319.

mind is far more mature than is usual for his age." His sister Virginie wrote that "My brother is grown so tall that when he arrived we could scarcely recognize him, but we have found all those qualities in him that we always knew. He is just as good a brother as he was at Chavaniac. He is so like Papa that people in the street can see immediately that he is his son."[297]

For a while, it was supposed that Lafayette might resettle in America. Washington, only about a month before his death, warned Lafayette against such a move. At the time, the United States was involved in an undeclared naval war with France, and political passions raged in America between Federalists and Jeffersonians. Lafayette wanted to remain neutral; "his wish is to possess a small farm where he can enjoy ease & quiet." But if he came to America, "he will be assailed by the opposition party" and it would be virtually impossible "for him to avoid taking a *side,* without being suspected by *both sides.* That if he joins the Government party [the Federalists], he must relinquish all hope, & expectation of countenance from his own Country, under its present form; and if he joins the opposition [the Jeffersonians], he will of course be frowned upon by the Government under whose protection he is settling."[298]

Shortly after Lafayette returned to France, Napoleon offered to appoint him as minister to the United States. Even though he was destitute, Lafayette refused the appointment explaining that because of "My feeling and My Habits in the United States I could not well reconcile to the acting a foreign Character, however friendly, nor could I with Ease to myself, either within or without put off my American Regimentals. I may be a Happy Visitor, and so I shall one day or another, but am not fitt to be an Ambassador of One Country to the other. I feel it Better

297. Quoted in Unger, *Lafayette,* 320.

298. George Washington to Timothy Pickering, Mount Vernon, November 3, 1799, *Washington Papers, Retirement Series,* IV, 384.

than it can be Expressed."[299]

Congress commiserated with the impoverished Lafayette. In 1794 it voted Lafayette $24,424 as compensation for his service as a major general during the Revolution. It was estimated that he had spent over $200,000 of his personal funds in pursuance of the Revolution. In 1803 Congress granted Lafayette 11,520 acres of land in the Ohio Territory. President Thomas Jefferson then nominated, and the Senate confirmed, the appointment of Lafayette as governor of the new Louisiana Territory. The President transferred Lafayette's Ohio land holdings to more valuable land situated in Louisiana. Jefferson wrote Lafayette that "I would prefer your presence to an army of 10,000 men to assure the tranquility of the country. The old French inhabitants would immediately attach themselves to you and to the United States." Lafayette thought long and hard about such a move. He decided to reject the offer as long as there was still a chance for liberty in France.[300] He also rejected Napoleon's offer of a peerage in the French national Senate, preferring, instead, to remain in retirement from active politics.

In the fall of 1807, Adrienne Lafayette became seriously ill. She died on Christmas night 1807. Her final words were to her husband, "Je suis tout à vous." "I am yours entirely." Married to Adrienne for thirty-four years, the fifty-year-old Lafayette fell into a deep depression. "I knew I loved her a great deal, that I needed her, but it is only in losing her that I have been able to separate myself from what is left of me for the rest of a life which had once seemed to me so full and will now forever be empty of happiness and comfort." Adrienne was buried in the corner of the Picpus cemetery, a former convent nationalized by the revolutionary government, where, in the last days of the Reign

299. To Alexander Hamilton, LaGrange, France, February 10, 1801, *Hamilton Papers*, XXV, 334.

300. Unger, *Lafayette*, 334, 335.

of Terror, more than thirteen hundred victims were buried in two long trenches. Among those executed and buried at the convent were Adrienne's mother, grandmother, and sister. After their return to France in 1799, Adrienne and her sister located the burial site of their relatives and successfully lobbied to have it designated a private cemetery for the relatives of those executed and entombed in the two trenches.

## THE NATION'S GUEST

On February 9, 1824, President James Monroe invited Lafayette to visit America. Congress passed a resolution endorsing the invitation. An American naval vessel would be provided for the trip and all expenses would be paid by the guest nation. At sixty-six and an invalid[301] this would probably be Lafayette's last opportunity to visit his adoptive country. He accepted the president's invitation, but booked passage on the *Cadmus,* a private American frigate. Accompanying Lafayette were his son, his secretary, and his valet. The *Cadmus* sailed from L'Havre on July 13, 1824, and sighted land a month later. On Sunday morning, August 15, the ship docked at Staten Island. Cannon roared and hundreds of small boats greeted the returning hero. Because of the Sabbath, the ceremonial arrival in New York City was delayed a day. As he set foot on Manhattan he was met by two columns of revolutionary veterans dressed in their tattered, ill-fitting uniforms. As the General walked through this gauntlet each veteran snapped to attention as best their aged bodies would allow and sounded off with their name, their company, and the battle they had fought in under Lafayette's command. "Robert Jones, Company

301. After breaking his left leg in a fall, an experimental procedure to set the leg caused gangrene and Lafayette's upper leg and hip were painfully immobile. He could not ride a horse and walked with a severe limp even while using a cane. In America, his limp reminded people of the wound he had received at the battle of Brandywine.

B, Brandywine, sir!," "Steven Smith, Company A, Barren Hill, sir!," "Thomas Brown Company C Yorktown, sir." It was too emotional for the General. He broke down in tears.[302]

During the next thirteen months Lafayette visited all twenty-four states in the Union. Wherever he went, he was greeted by processions and military guards, by the pealing of bells, the salutes of cannon, the speeches of dignitaries, banquets and toasts, balls, fireworks, banners, illuminations, and receptions where he shook the hands of thousands and kissed baby after baby. He laid the cornerstones for the monument to the Battle of Bunker Hill (the fiftieth anniversary of which would be celebrated in 1825), the University of Vermont in Burlington, and the public library in Brooklyn. He visited old friends wherever he went—the eighty-nine-year-old John Adams in Braintree and the eighty-one-year-old Thomas Jefferson in Charlottesville, where the seventy-four-year-old James Madison joined them. He visited the tomb of George and Martha Washington at Mount Vernon where family descendants presented him with a ring containing a lock of Washington's hair. He visited with the flamboyant General Andrew Jackson at the Hermitage near Nashville. When someone commented on his command of the English language, he would regularly respond: "And why should I not, being an American just returned from a long visit to Europe?"[303]

He addressed a joint session of Congress. Congress gave him 24,000 acres of land near Tallahassee, Florida, and $200,000 in government bonds yielding six percent annually and redeemable in ten years. Lafayette spent the last month of his tour as a personal guest of newly inaugurated President John Quincy Adams in the White House. Lafayette, joined by the President, returned to Charlottesville to meet one last time with Jefferson and Madison.

302. Unger, *Lafayette,* 350.

303. Marian Klamkin, *The Return of Lafayette,* 1824–1825 *(New York,* 1975), 34.

Adams convinced Lafayette to stay through his sixty-eighth birthday on which day the President held an elaborate state dinner. Unapologetically violating protocol, the President offered a toast "to the 22nd of February and the 6th of September," the birthdays of Washington and Lafayette. Lafayette responded with a toast "To the 4th of July, the birthday of liberty."[304] The next day as Lafayette prepared to leave, the President, the Cabinet, and other dignitaries gathered to offer their final goodbyes. President Adams addressed the departing hero.

> We shall look upon you always as belonging to us, during the whole of our life, as belonging to our children after us. You are ours by more than patriotic self-devotion with which you flew to the aid of our fathers at the crisis of our fate; ours by that unshaken gratitude for your services which is a precious portion of our inheritance; ours by that tie of love, stronger than death, which has linked your name for endless ages of time with the name of Washington. . . . Speaking in the name of the whole people of the United States, and at a loss only for language to give utterance to that feeling of attachment with which the heart of the nation beats as the heart of one man, I bid you a reluctant and affectionate farewell.

After a long pause necessary for Lafayette to compose himself, the departing hero responded "God bless you, Sir, and all who surround you. God bless the American people, each of their states and the federal government. Accept this patriotic farewell of a heart that will overflow with gratitude until the moment it ceases to beat."[305] Sobbing, the two men embraced.

Lafayette took a carriage to the Potomac where the

304. Unger, *Lafayette,* 359.
305. Ibid., 359–60.

steamship *Mount Vernon* took him and his fellow travelers to the coast and the newly-christened American frigate appropriately named for the occasion, the *Brandywine.* Captain Morris had been instructed to take Lafayette to any European port of his choice. After a voyage of twenty-four days, they arrived at L'Havre. As Lafayette readied to disembark, the first lieutenant presented him with the ship's American flag. "We cannot," he said, "confide it to more glorious keeping! Take it, dear General, may it forever recall to you your alliance with the American nation; may it also sometimes recall to your recollection those who will never forget the happiness they enjoyed of passing twenty-four days with you on board of the *Brandywine*, in being displayed twice a year on the towers of your hospitable dwelling, may it recall to your neighbors the anniversary of two great epochs, whose influence on the whole world is incalculable—the birth of Washington and the declaration of the independence of our country."[306]

## AN AMERICAN BURIAL

Nine years after his return to France Lafayette died in Paris. He had been ill for about a month after being exposed to a drenching rain and a frigid gale that unexpectedly caught him in an open carriage while riding through the Bois de Bologne. Coming in and out of consciousness, at 4:00 A.M. on May 20, 1834, he clutched and kissed a locket that contained a picture of his wife. The case was inscribed with Adrienne's dying words: "Je suis tout à vous." He then closed his eyes and died.

Both France and the United States went into national mourning. Worried that a public funeral could lead to unrest in the streets that might escalate into an uprising against the monarchy, King Louis-Philippe ordered a military funeral for Lafayette with no public participation

306. Klamkin, *The Return of Lafayette*, 199.

allowed. He was buried in Picpus Cemetery next to his wife in soil he brought back from Bunker Hill in 1825. This was the perfect resting place for Lafayette—in France but in American soil. Originally, Lafayette had planned his burial in soil brought back from each of the twenty-four states he had visited in 1824–1825. Unfortunately, toward the end of his American tour, the steamship *Mechanic* carrying Lafayette, his entourage, and the soil that Lafayette had collected, sunk in the Ohio River. The next best thing, Lafayette thought, was soil from Bunker Hill.

Six weeks after his death, in a graveside service, American minister Edward Livingston placed an American flag over the grave. Since that day, an American flag has flown continuously over the grave, even during the Nazi occupation from 1940 to 1944. Set back from the street and enclosed by a high stone wall, the grave is inconspicuous. A small American flag was never noticed by the German occupiers. When on July 4, 1917, a memorial service was held at the gravesite, Colonel Charles E. Stanton, an aide of General John J. Pershing, reportedly said, "Lafayette, nous voilà," "Lafayette, we are here."

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