

**James Madison to Albert Gallatin, August 2, 1813.
Partly in Cipher. Transcription: The Writings of James
Madison, ed. Gaillard Hunt. New York: G.P. Putnam's
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TO ALBERT GALLATIN. MAD. MSS.

Washington, Aug 2, 1813

Dear Sir —You will learn from the Secy. of State the painful manner in which the Senate have mutilated the Mission to St Petersburg.¹ But the course & circumstances of the proceeding require more of explanation than may fall within his scope, and more indeed, than can well be conveyed on paper.

¹ On April 17 Gallatin was appointed Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary with John Quincy Adams and James A. Bayard, but it was intended that his post as Secretary of the Treasury should be kept open for him. He left Washington April 21 and the Senate rejected the nomination July 19. On February 9, 1814, it declared his seat as Secretary of the Treasury vacant, because he was absent from it, and on the same day he was nominated to be Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to England. Jones, Secretary of the Navy, served as Secretary of the Treasury *ad interim* from April 21, but on July 24 he wrote to Madison that a continuance of the double service was absolutely impracticable. Nevertheless, he continued to serve till George W. Campbell was appointed February 9, 1814.

Previously to sending in the nomination of the Envoys, there was no indication, that, if the popularity of the object did not prevent opposition, it would extend beyond a portion of the Senate essentially short of a majority. And there is reason to believe that if a preliminary²

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attempt to embarrass the subject had been decided on at the proper time, *and before out-door means could be interposed*, the desired & expected result would have been secured. Liberality however yielded to an adjournment of the question, *and the opportunity afforded by it was*

2 Italics for cypher.

industriously improved. The first step was, after formally ascertaining the arrangement under which you were included in the Mission, *to obtain a vote* declaring an incompatibility (without specifying whether Constitutional

or otherwise) between the domestic & diplomatic appts. The tendency of this proposition *to comprehend as many and to commit as much as possible, is obvious*. It would seem notwithstanding that the vote of incompatibility was *concurred in by some who regarded it* not as an obstacle to an ultimate concurrence in the nomination, but rather as a protest throwing the whole responsibility upon the Executive. The next step was to *communicate this opinion of the Senate to me, with a view either to extort a compliance, or to unite against the nomination all, or as many as possible, who had concurred* in the vote of incompatibility. In this stage of the business it was the confident opinion of the supporters of the nomination that *inflexibility on the part of the Ex would ensure a majority for it and their unanimous & urgent advice as well on general grounds, as on that particular calculation, not to yield to the irregular views of the adverse party*. The event proved that the final *purposes of certain individuals on whom the turning of the scale depended*, had been miscounted. It is not easy to express the mixed feelings produced by the disappointment, *or the painfulness of my own in particular*. It was at first suggested from some friendly sources, as most advisable in such a posture of things to *send in a renomination founded on a vacancy in the Secretaryship of the Treasury*; and under certain points of view *this expedient had its recommendations*. They were met however by difficulties & considerations not to be got over. 1. *The ground taken by the Executive did not admit a compliance with the condition imposed by the Senate*, without a *palpable inconsistency*. 2. Those who had approved & urged *this ground* could not *brook the idea*

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of putting their opponents ostensibly in the right & themselves in the wrong. 3. It was calculated, that the mediation, if accepted by G. B. would be over, & the envoys on their way home, before the decision of the Senate could reach St Petersburg and that this last wd. certainly be the case shd. the mediation be rejected as *was becoming more & more probable especially considering the prospects on the Continent, &, as seems now to be put beyond doubt*, by a late communication from Beasely at London. Nor were these the only views of the subject. It was apprehended by some of the *best disposed & best informed of the Senate* that a *renomination would not secure the object*. As it had become certain that the *open & secret adversaries* together amounted to a *formidable number* who would be doubly *gratified by a double triumph*, it was *suspected that after succeeding in getting the Treasury vacated*, it would be a *prerequisite to a confirmation of the other app* that the *vacancy should be actually filled* in order to *prevent its being kept open for your return*, which might be *looked for within the term of six months*;

and that with this view a *resolution might be obtained* declaring the inconsistency of a *protracted vacancy with the public service* & the incompatibility of the *two offices held by the Secretary of the Navy to be used* in like manner with the *first resolution, as a motive, or pretext for embarrassing & if possible getting rid of the renomination*. It is certain that some who had *intimated an intended change of their votes*, in case the *Treasury Dept. should be vacated*, had in view that the *vacancy should be forthwith filled* & even that a *nomination to it should go in with the renomination*. Whether a *majority would have gone such lengths is uncertain*; but *strong symptoms* existed of a *temper in the Body capable of going very great lengths*. And apart from all other considerations it would have been impossible even if it had been *intended to make & fill a vacancy in the Treasy Dept* that the *consent of the Senate* in the other case could be *purchased by a pledge* to that effect. Besides the *degradation of the Ex.*, it would have introduced a *species of barter of 'the most fatal tendency*.

I have given you this summary that you may understand the true character of a *proceeding which has given us so much concern*. I will add to it two observations only, 1. that

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the *Senate by resting their negative on the opinion of official incompatibility tacitly acknowledge a personal fitness & so far defeat their own hostility: 2. that the whole proceeding according to every friendly opinion , will have the effect of giving you a stronger hold on the confidence & support of the Nation. Judging from the effect as already known this cannot fail to be the case.*

I have just recovered strength eno', after a severe & tedious attack of bilious fever, to bear a journey to the Mountains whither I am about setting out. The Physicians prescribe it as essential to my thorough recovery, & security agst. a relapse at the present season. For recent occurrences & the general state of affairs, I refer to the official communications going by this conveyance. If it were less inconvenient to me, to lengthen my letter, I should recollect that I send it, without expecting that it will find you at Petersburg, should it happen not to be intercepted on its passage.

Accept my affectionate esteem & best wishes.