

## NOTE TO THE TEXTS

The present edition of Alexander James Dallas' *An Exposition of the Causes and Character of the War*, follows the edition printed at Washington, D.C. by Roger Chew Weightman in 1815. Alone among the available editions, the title of the Washington edition does not anticipate or reflect the end of the War of 1812; and this edition was used by Dallas' son in a late nineteenth-century reprint of the work.

Other available editions have been consulted, especially regarding typographical clarity of the punctuation, including: the edition printed by Thomas Manning at the offices of the *Aurora* in Philadelphia (titled more expansively, and retrospectively, *An Exposition of the Causes and Character of the Late War with Great Britain*) and dated April 1815; the Baltimore edition of the same month, which follows the title and includes the editor's comments from the *Aurora*;<sup>1</sup> the edition printed at Middlebury, Vermont by William Slade, dated July 4, 1815 (which like the edition printed at Concord N.H. by Isaac and Walter R. Hill, 1815, amends and supplements the Philadelphia title: *An Exposition of the Causes and Character of the Late War between the United States and Great Britain*); and the text reprinted in George Mifflin Dallas' book of 1871 (which

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1. The British edition published in London by W.I. Clement, 1815, follows the title and text of the Philadelphia edition without mention of the *Aurora* or Manning's remarks; and the French translation published in Paris in 1816 quotes and explicitly follows the London edition—though attributing the work to James Madison.

follows the Washington edition and title, thought revising the punctuation).<sup>2</sup>

The note which appears at the start of the text of the *Exposition*, explaining its purpose, is identical in the Washington edition and in G.M. Dallas' reprint; while the editor of the *Aurora*, for example, supplied his own "Introductory Observations" for his edition—and apparently introduced small variations to the title and text as well.<sup>3</sup> Manning remarks in his own prefatory note that the *Exposition* was part of a plan by the executive, in support of the war effort, to present "the causes and progress of the war" to the American people, and adds,

...a copy of the *Exposition* has accidentally fallen into our hands, and we think we can do no better service than give it to the public, as the best means of repelling the ribaldry issued by those whose chagrin is excited to the greatest extravagance by the successful and glorious termination of the war.<sup>4</sup>

Manning expresses the aim of informing citizens happy with the outcome of the war in their expected exchanges with "ribaldry" from those displeased with the "successful and glorious termination of the war." This amounts to a very negative image of the Federalist opposition.

In contrast with the emphatic partisanship of Manning's Philadelphia preface, the prefatory note supplied to the Middlebury, Vermont edition emphasizes the author's non-partisanship. "Amid the tumult of party passion," says the Middlebury preface, the *Exposition*,

...raised only the voice of reason; and aimed only to present a clear and distinct view of the *causes* and *character* of the war, as

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2. See George Mifflin Dallas 1871, *Life and Writings of Alexander James Dallas*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott.
  3. Notably the word "attentive" is absent from the opening paragraph.
  4. "Introductory Observations" to A.J. Dallas 1815, *Exposition*, by the Editor of the *Aurora*, T.S. Manning: Philadelphia, p. 3.

a motive for *union* and *energy*, in its prosecution [and] embraces nothing which can in the least degree wound the sensibilities of the *American* federalist.<sup>5</sup>

Still, recalling Jefferson's words, from his inaugural address, following "the Revolution of 1800"—that "We are all Republicans, we are all Federalists"—since he surely did not think that all were members of the same political party or faction, it may be significant that we read here of the "sensibilities of the *American* federalists," and not those of the American *Federalist*.

Where there are differences between the Washington edition and G.M. Dallas' 1871 edition, I have followed the Washington edition. The spelling has been modernized and Americanized throughout, contemporary standards of capitalization introduced, and the dates given in Dallas' copious notes have been rendered in a simplified and uniform manner. Cross reference between identified names and events are provided for by the index.

In adding to Dallas' footnotes, I have chiefly attempted to briefly identify the persons and events under discussion for the sake of the contemporary reader; and I have also filled in some dates or details which were left out of the original text—at positions obviously intended for later insertions. These same positions in the text were left open in all the printed editions consulted. Brief definitions have been provided for selected items of Dallas' vocabulary, and I have indented Dallas' longer quotations from his cited sources.

The text was chiefly written in Washington in November and December of 1814, shortly before the end of the War of 1812, though some of Dallas' footnotes cite letters from early 1815. This suggests that the author was still making improvements, while the early pages were in press.

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5. "Introduction," to A.J. Dallas 1815, *Exposition*. William Slade: Middlebury, Vermont, p. 2.

President Madison sent a copy of the text from Washington, to former President Jefferson with his letter of March 12, 1815, and that is reason to suppose that the entire text had been printed in Washington by that time. Madison remarks in his letter to Jefferson that the final pages had not been printed by the time the news of the Treaty of Ghent arrived in Washington on February 13, 1815.<sup>6</sup> (Dallas dated the text to February 10, 1815.) It seems reasonable to assume that the President received a copy of the text soon after it was printed. The edition printed at the offices of the *Aurora* in Philadelphia came later—dated April 1815. Several small lapses or omissions in the Weightman text may suggest that Dallas was chiefly devoting his time to his pressing work as Secretary of Treasury. These omission persist in G.M. Dallas' text of 1871.

Once news of the peace reached Washington February 13, 1815, President Madison first thought to suppressed publication of the *Exposition*, emphasizing to Jefferson, for instance, that “it is to be guarded against publication.”<sup>7</sup> But the work was quickly published, in any case; it originally carried the following prefatory note of the Washington edition:

NOTE.

This Exposition of the Causes and Character of the War, was prepared and submitted to the press, before any account had been received in the United States, of the signature of a treaty of peace, by the American and the British negotiators: and it would have been difficult, even if it were desirable to withhold the exposition from the public.

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6. See President Madison's letter to Thomas Jefferson, dated Washington, March 12, 1815; reprinted in Madison 1900-1910, *The Writings of James Madison*. Hunt, Gaillard ed. vol. VIII, p. 332ff.
  7. *Ibid.*, p. 333. Jefferson returned the copy to Madison with his letter of March 23, 1815—strongly recommending publication in both Europe and America. “I have read it with great pleasure,” he wrote, “but with irresistible desire that it should be published.”

But the charges which have been solemnly exhibited against the American government, in the face of the world, render an exposition of its conduct necessary, in peace as much as in war, for the honor of the United States, and the unsullied reputation of their arms; lest those charges should obtain credit with the present generation; or pass, for truth, into the history of the times, upon the evidence of a silent acquiescence.

One might well imagine that President Madison supported the writing of the *Exposition* partly in order to place its author, his Secretary of Treasury, in a forceful position to convince Congress of the need for financial reforms to support the war effort. But with the war over, rehashing the causes and character of the war might have distracted from the public acceptability of the peace terms or otherwise caused offense. Though Madison asked Jefferson to guard against its publication, the prefatory note already indicates that “it would have been difficult, even if it were desirable to withhold the exposition from the public.” The work circulated without official sponsorship and without identifying the author.<sup>8</sup>

In a letter from President Madison to Secretary Dallas, dated at Montpelier, April 14, 1815, and chiefly concerned with other matters, Madison added a final paragraph mentioning the *Exposition*:

I observe that the “exposition,” etc. is finding its way to the public here and to the world in different ways, and I have not yet seen that the government is charged by its opponents, with any indelicate participation. The idea of Mr. Jefferson, therefore, of publishing the work officially in a different dress, could not be executed without more difficulty than occurred to him. Whether it ought to go out from the government at all is another question. If the truths it contains can be otherwise sufficiently promul-

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8. Only the Boston edition, *An Exposition of the Causes and Character of the Late War*, remarks that the work is “attributed to Mr. Secretary Dallas” and restores the wording of the opening paragraph.

gated, and with sufficient creditability, it will be best, I continue to think, to let them speak for themselves.<sup>9</sup>

Madison's letter was written after the printing of the Washington edition of the *Exposition*, and testifies to public circulation of the work by mid-April, 1815—but without the official status of a document issued by the government. Madison still argues against giving the work an official status, which would risk the charge of “indelicate participation” in the publication of the work and its complaints against the British; and, in fact, Secretary Dallas had not been credited as the author. Madison also continued to oppose Jefferson's idea that the work might have been first re-edited, to make it more palatable, and then issued by the government. That option was already excluded by the circulation of the printed edition.<sup>10</sup> Madison is content to allow the work to circulate, as written, “to the public here and to the world in different ways,” since “the truths it contains,” can “speak for themselves;” and consequently he saw no need to risk an official sponsorship.

The peace terms were generous, and the public spirit was lifted both by the end of the war and by the nearly simultaneous news of General Andrew Jackson's victory over the British at the Battle of New Orleans. The publication of the *Exposition*, based on the documents and correspondence made available to Congress by the President and passed on to Dallas, did no harm and supplied an important historical documentation of the War of 1812—and more broadly, an explanation and justification of the foreign policy of the early republic. “If the assertion, that it has been a policy to preserve peace and amity with all the nations of the world, be doubted,” wrote Dallas, “the proofs are at hand.”

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9. Letter of President Madison to Secretary A.J. Dallas, dated April 14, 1815; Reprinted in G.M. Dallas, *Life and Writings*, p. 399.

10. The British and French editions explicitly claim that the work is officially sponsored by the American government.