

Old and New Diplomacy

Diplomatic Practice, by Sir Ernest Satow. 2 vols. New York: Longmans, Green & Company. \$9.

DIPLMACY ministers to a transcendent weakness of the human mind. We cannot, despite ourselves, avoid the love of mystery; even the record of crime gives rise to passionate investigation. But when the mystery is moved to a stage where the contending forces are the destinies of whole peoples, the drama has in it elements that, to the superficial observer, hinge on the majestic. An ambassador is but one stage removed from a king; your king is but priest turned secular. So the united forces of religion and politics go to endow him with his halo. Even an attaché possesses his pathetic remnant of public glory. He is, as we feel, in touch with the infinite unseen. He knows the inner secrets hidden from the gaze of men of common clay. We look at him indeed; for it is the fundamental attribute of democracy that a cat may look at a king. Yet in our hearts we know that he is the symbol of mightier things than ourselves. We would not believe it if we were told that he was a young Oxford graduate, socially purposive on four hundred pounds a year; or some sprig of the lesser German princelets whom sixteen quarterings have combined to render respectable. After all, most of us are incurably romantic. We feel the fascination of the unknown. We tacitly equate it with the unknowable. So to our minds diplomacy becomes that which made Talleyrand and Metternich the arbiters of imperial destiny, and turned Lord Lyons into the most respected man of his time. If a country is happy that has no history, assuredly the diplomacy is fortunate that has no analysis. For knowledge is the dissipation of tradition; and where we are careful to examine we are forced to the de-thronement of legend.

Sir Ernest Satow is one of the most distinguished English diplomatists of the last twenty-five years. He has had infinite experience, and unlimited opportunities for observation. He has written a guide to diplomatic practice which supersedes every previous work upon the subject. It is exact, it is exhaustive, it is scholarly. Everything seems to be here. Why did the coach of the French ambassador so rudely jostle that of his Spanish colleague in Restoration England? Why would not the Emperor of Russia address Napoleon III in brotherly terms? How many guns do you fire in salute to an envoy extraordinary? What care must a diplomat take in his dinner-table conversations? How did the United States force Turkey to receive her ambassadors? None of us knows these things, yet they are the staple topic of diplomatic etiquette. What the book reveals is the astounding fact that royal manners and those of their representatives are extremely codified. The kiss of kings may have affection in it, but it is the affection of arrangement. The ambassador does not go to his tailor and give him—as we had fondly hoped—carte-blanc in artistic creation; the patterns actually exist and it becomes clear on examination that even into these arcana imperii the curse of standardized parts has penetrated. A terrible thought strikes one who reads that the days of the old diplomacy are passing. Already our ambassador goes to court in ordinary evening dress. Already the title of excellency is dropped in private conversation. The last century established the egalitarianism of cats in the matter of spectacular regalism; but our own day may make it possible for cats to be kings themselves. So does democracy divest itself of its dreams.

Even the diplomats change their character. We have no Metternichs at whose lightest word the potentates of christendom will tremble. The last of the Renaissance bravos disappeared from Germany with Marschall von Bieberstein, and from France with Delcassé. Our diplomats to-day are men of different stamp. Publishers and publicists, not inured to the business of nosing out the secret motives of men, we deem well fitted to take charge of national interests. We even, in England at least, tilt lustily against those who would make income and birth the test of entrance to the career. Tact and patience, and an inability to speak French or German seem the fundamental requirements of Anglo-Saxon countries. Our Frenchmen retain their subtlety; our Germans will not put off their braggadocio. But when the last imperial representative dines quietly in a public hotel where any one may know what he eats, or gives gay messages to the daily press, it is high time we recognized the fact of diplomatic decadence. Mr. Bakhmetieff realized with fine perception the intimate truth of things when he refused to serve a republican Russia. The diplomacy that is dying was the appanage of a flavored and delicate aristocracy. It dealt in gentle phrases with the nice problems of ceremony and dress. That which is coming is food for lawyers and men of business who are not apt to be exquisite. The old day is passing, and we have moments that herald the advent of a novel dawn.

To such reflections will Sir Ernest Satow's book give rise. But there is also one precious gift he brings us that pricks to comment. Most of us have some time wondered where the young diplomatist has picked up his bewildered ignorance. We knew him for an expert in dress; we admired the skill with which he graced a drawing room; we emulated his skilful contempt for things of the mind; we rejoiced at his inability to realize that the thoughts of men who did not share his inside knowledge were quite important. When he thought, to take a spurious instance, that the blood and thunder of Mr. Leo Maxse were no less deeply cherished by the American people than the profound dalliance of Lord Bryce, we pardoned him for so sparkling a contribution to the gaiety of nations. If he thought that Von Holst had proved the fatal inferiority of the American constitution to the pale shadow of German federalism we did not doubt that he would grow wiser as he remained longer with us. When he imagined that the America of reality was still the America of Tocqueville and Boutmy, we smiled benignly in the hope that he would seat himself in the Twentieth Century Limited and taste the sweets of Chicago. But always the dim hope returned that one day the secret processes of his mind would be revealed. Where did he get his information? Whom did he trust for his authority? Why did he limit life to the official ante-rooms of Washington and Paris, London and Berlin? Or was the whole a mark to hide an essential profundity? Does he in fact know it all, and proclaim his ineptitude the better to fool us with his wisdom. It is to these questions that Sir Ernest Satow supplies an illuminating reply.

For, from the fulness of his knowledge, he advises the young diplomat to read some, at any rate, of a five-page list of books. It is a fascinating list, particularly in its omissions. A diplomat who had by heart the philosophy of Acton's lectures on modern history might, indeed, read all that follows with comparative safety, granted at the outset the possession of a mind; for he would therein possess the slide rule of political judgment. But, for the rest, it would give him little or no insight into the mind of

peoples. Capefigue would tell him the conventional lies about the French restoration and the Orleans régime with the incompetence that comes from a passion for untruth. Lord Cromer's *Modern Egypt* would persuade him that the government of subject peoples is a fascinating experiment in authoritarianism with half a humorous eye to an ignorant public opinion at home. Fournier's biography of Napoleon would give him a good, straightforward narrative of a career that, in this age at least, needs straightforward condemnation. Koser's *Frederic the Great* would enable him to equate eighteenth century Prussia with a very Lutheran heaven. Senator Lodge's *History of the Revolution* would familiarize him with the elevated philosophy of cultured Boston. The letters of Queen Victoria would make him an anti-feminist; and the six-volume pamphlet of Taine on the Revolution would—unless he had a strong head—make him an anti-democrat. Sir John Seeley's *Expansion of England* is the eloquent product of a vicious idealism. Talleyrand's memoirs will teach him only the more intimate depths of diplomatic immorality. So one could go on endlessly. There seems no shadow of suspicion in Sir Ernest Satow's mind that our youthful diplomat who has been so nourished can only serve to perpetuate a system that we hate instead of helping to inaugurate a régime that we demand.

Those who are to embark upon a diplomatic career need, in fact intellectual contacts of a very different kind. They are to deal with institutions in terms of men, and they are to take account of subtle characteristics that have, often enough, been formed by the traditions of half a thousand years. What they really need is to understand the fundamental political movements of our time—the progressive movement in America, the socialist movement in Germany, the new English radicalism, the anti-étatisme of France. It is not in the least a matter of traditional history. They may read their Ranke, their Macaulay, their Taine, their Kluchevsky, and still be uneducated to the matter in hand. An off-hand judgment would suggest that the Greats school at Oxford, with the addition of a year at the London School of Economics under Mr. Wallas and Mr. Webb, would far more nearly orientate them in the essentials of modern civilization. They need to learn that an I. W. W. agitator is quite curiously human, that socialism is not a synonym for confiscation, that we have passed, let us say, from the England of Mrs. Humphry Ward and the America of the genteel Longfellow to the England of Mr. Galsworthy and the America of Jane Addams. They would read the psychology of William James, the analyses of Tarde, the essays of Dr. Figgis, the programs of Eduard Bernstein. Both we and they would profit by it.

This work inaugurates a series which is to deal with international law and diplomacy. Sir Ernest Satow sets a high standard for his successors. One cannot help hoping that its editor, Dr. Oppenheim, will not be content with formal treatises, but give us the more subtle interpretations we so badly need. An editor, for example, who could persuade Mr. Brailsford to set down his reflections after reading the lives of some dozen of the great diplomats would have rendered an incalculable service to mankind. For, after all, behind the formal theory and practice, there is the eager quickening that comes from the interplay of human ambition and human interest. When someone has successfully attempted that task the history of international relations will be provided with the essential key to its understanding.

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FIFTH AVENUE AND 37TH STREET
NEW YORK

Profitable Essays

A Virginian Village, by E. S. Nadal. New York: The Macmillan Co. \$1.75 net.

IS there anything more delightful in the world than to be an old gentleman and write your reminiscences? Mr. Nadal would doubtless say yes—to be a young one, getting the actual stuff from which reminiscences are derived. His book conveys, not explicitly but implicitly, a sense of a freedom to live interestedly and irresponsibly which was perhaps the greatest privilege of the stronger sex of an earlier generation. Certainly the memoirs of our serious, sociological age will not have this same mellowness. A recent reviewer in *The New Republic* has called the essay archaic as a literary form; but he allows that it may be still used, in the revelatory vein, by those who are not too scientifically minded or too self-conscious to let themselves go.

Mr. Nadal has a number of excellent qualifications for the rôle of discursive essayist. In the first place, his experience runs back to Virginia "before the war," crosses the sea to diplomatic London in Lowell's day as ambassador, returns to journalistic New York, and finally disports itself in those parts of the West and South which produce good horse-flesh. Mr. Nadal loves horses and he also loves to see them, as most true devotees of the race-track do, against a fine background of natural scenery. He laments that he spent so much of his youth sitting on a fence-rail looking at the landscape, but this occupation seems to have borne its literary fruit: he has a genial responsiveness to the moods of nature. Then he has humor, and what is