

CHAPTER XXVI

DIPLOMACY

Diplomacy is a feudal survival. It is an anachronism. Up to very recently the ambassador was the personal representative of the King. He did not represent the nation. He was the person of the sovereign in a foreign court. He enjoyed the protection and many of the prerogatives of his master. His person was inviolate. So was the embassy. It was the territory of the King in another land. This is the historical origin of modern diplomacy.

Ambassadors were and still are chosen almost exclusively from the old aristocracy. They come almost exclusively from the feudal classes. The foreign secretary comes from the same class. Foreign representatives are not chosen by the people; they are not even appointed by Parliament or by any popular process. The only contact the peoples of different nations

have with one another is through men who are in no way responsible to the people. They have but little if any sympathy with democracy. They represent their class and little else. The diplomacy of the world is still dynastic and feudal. Even the United States chooses her ambassadors almost exclusively from men of wealth.

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The diplomatic class remains a caste apart. It associates almost exclusively with the old nobility. Men enter the service young. They are educated and live their lives away from the currents of present-day thought. Only by chance do they know anything about what concerns the common people. (A man must first of all have a substantial private income to enter the foreign service.) That is often required by law. In other countries it is required by the expense involved in maintaining the dignity of the country in a foreign court.

Diplomacy maintains its castelike exclusion in yet another way. The Foreign Office is not responsible to the nation. It is scarcely responsible to Parliament. This is so even in countries where responsible governments exist.

Foreign affairs are secret. Even the ministry is often ignorant of treaties and engagements. When made they are sealed up in the archives of the Foreign Office. They frequently come to light only after the country has been committed to war. Even members of Parliament may not know the engagements of their country. This is another survival of mediæval traditions when the ambassador was the personal representative of the King. Foreign affairs were the concern of the ruler, and no one else. And modern states have continued the tradition of secrecy.

If a member of the parliamentary body requests information as to foreign affairs he is informed "reasons of state" make it inadvisable for the public to know.

Here we have another cause of war. The diplomatic caste does not represent peoples. It believes in war, in its class, in the honor of nations, in the old mediæval idea of the state. Diplomats are indifferent to democracy. They do not believe that the world can be carried on in any other way or by any other class than it has been for centuries.

Diplomacy is not frank. It breeds distrust.

Even its language is a language of its own. In a crisis it is likely to be misunderstood. It is used to escape responsibility, often to be susceptible of conflicting interpretations. Wars have been due to the temper and the personal intrigues of diplomats.

In recent years diplomacy has become an agency of business, of economic penetration, and financial imperialism. It induces weak countries to buy machine-guns and battle-ships as a condition to the lending of money. It aids bankers and concession seekers. It promotes the closed door and discriminations. The Foreign Office of Germany was merged with the Krupps, the Deutsche Bank, and the industrial groups of the country. The negotiations of the Powers over the Bagdad Railway, over concessions and loans in Morocco, Egypt, and Turkey, the penetration of the Powers into China, and the disputes over South Africa were all interwoven with the activities of the big business interests of the European countries which frankly recognize the economic character of present-day diplomacy.

Secret diplomacy, private diplomacy, irresponsible diplomacy, is an anachronism. It is

a menace to the world. It is the most unprotected spot in democracy. In the United States it is a political affront. There is no reason why we should adjust ourselves to the survival of dynastic traditions and compromise ourselves with the class relationships of mediæval Europe.

For even we have class diplomacy, the diplomacy of business. Our foreign representatives are successful merchants, bankers, corporation lawyers. They seek a foreign post for social recognition. And they carry to their posts not only a lack of training, of knowledge, and of language, but what is far more dangerous, they carry the attitude of mind of the class from which they come.

Diplomacy should be public and open. It should be responsible to Parliament and Congress. There should be the fullest discussion of foreign engagements and treaties. There are objections to such publicity, it is true. There are many matters which it would be easier to dispose of in executive session. But whatever the objections, they pale in comparison with the evils of secrecy and the disposal of the foreign relations of a great state by an appointee of the

Executive, whose method of selection is either by birth or as a result of an election which turns not on foreign relations but on some accidental issue that happens to be before the nation.