

## VIII

### PEACEFUL TRIUMPHS OF THE SECOND TERM

AND now it must be briefly said how, in 1905, the President of the United States, having done much to enhance his country's strength and having made his personality quietly felt in more than one land across the seas, became one of the greatest figures then before the world, as a devoted and most successful peacemaker. Many of us can remember vividly how the struggle between the compact and trained strength of Japan, and the decayed, giant might of Russia, exerted at a vast distance, came to a deadlock, in which national pride and national suspiciousness withheld each country from seeking peace, although neither could gain anything by further fighting except at a ruinous cost. Early in this year Roosevelt, with his vividly sympathetic comprehension of the characters and situations of other countries, began anxiously to brood on the question whether neighbors could do no neighborly service. An Englishman, who, about this time, had a strange intermittent talk with him, while he simultaneously attended a Cabinet meeting in the next room, is reported to have brought home a quaint account of his emphatic

self-contradictory declarations, that there was nothing that could possibly be done and also that the war must stop. It was the odd superficial token of an intense, self-restrained watchfulness. The detailed story now before us of his intervention cannot usefully be abridged. Its effect upon every careful reader must be the same. I have used the word devoted, since no weaker word can well be applied to a man who, with overabundant work on his hands, put, as he did, his immense industry and resourcefulness to the severest strain which they ever underwent, unsolicited, in a high cause, in which rebuff and failure were most probable, and in which success, if it was to come, would very likely demand his trading all the credit and lustre to others.

His task was, at first, one of incessantly feeling his way, not only with Japan and Russia, but with France, England, and Germany. It should be said clearly that the only noticeable help which he found in these three neutral countries came from the German Emperor, whose help was zealous and valuable, and of whom his critical and humorous estimate became tinged with real gratitude. At a later stage when the combatant Powers showed coy signs of a wish for peace; later still when each was willing to negotiate, if, and if, and if; last of all

when their plenipotentiaries had met in America, and, like their armies, come to a deadlock from which only a strong arm could free them, the difficulty of the task never abated. His letters to Sir George Trevelyan, Mr. St. Loe Strachey, and others throw exceedingly pleasant lights upon the whole of this performance in diplomacy. At the close of August it ended with actual peace, just when matters had begun to seem quite hopeless. It had exacted of him throughout not only ability and courage, but unflinching patience and the sympathetic tact of a gentleman whose quality, if not always exhibited, was often almost as conspicuous as Lincoln's.

He was, too, helped here by his manly appreciation of a race so distant from us as the Japanese. The large subject of American relations with the Far East cannot here be opened up, but it may be said that the same right feeling that he showed in his attitude toward the dark races which are palpably inferior, governed him also in his various dealings with other races which, though we can never regard them from a superior standpoint, present quite as difficult a problem of human relationships. If his intervention in the Japanese struggle with Russia — in which by the way *Realpolitik* would have bidden an American states-

man to let the Japanese exhaust themselves — may be dismissed so briefly, it is because in this instance nothing but frank eulogy would be in place.

What Roosevelt then did, or at least the main result of it, has long been known to the world. It is astonishing to learn since his death that, at the same time, there was in secret falling on him the chief responsibility for bringing to a peaceful issue the controversy between France and Germany about Morocco, which ended at the Algeciras Conference in the spring of 1906. The German Emperor had begged him to use his influence with France, whose "bullying," he said, could not be much longer endured, to consent to a Conference of the Powers on Morocco. The precise aims of the Emperor may be a difficult subject of speculation, but there can be little doubt that then and for some years after he genuinely desired to keep peace upon the condition that Germany got her own way, that her wishes were in all cases complied with in Europe, more particularly in France, and that outside Europe her steps toward that "world-power," of which Bismarck had resolutely set aside the idea, proceeded unhindered. France was kept perpetually alarmed and provoked. That a powerful section in Germany cherished all along a wish one day to wipe out France as a Power is, I suppose, doubted

by nobody, and the moment was favorable since Russia was powerless to help France at the time.

The Algeiras Conference was one of a series of incidents which illustrated this general situation. The matter of Morocco (a country, by the way, of whose chronic lawlessness Americans had had a recent example) stood thus: France was greatly interested from the fact that she had extinguished after great provocation the sanguinary pirates who had ruled the adjacent Algeria, administered the country excellently, and incorporated it as one of the departments of France itself; indeed her interest in Morocco stood on a quite different and altogether higher level from that which any country, merely desirous to have colonial possessions or to safeguard and extend its trade, could claim. Spain was a neighboring civilized country, almost as close as Algeria. The legitimate fear of Germany at the time was that France and Spain between them, policing Morocco, would exclude German trade; beyond that confessedly lay the calculation that a special foothold of Germany in Morocco would be of future strategic value. As to the attitude of the British Government then, the most important point is that having been engaged in settling innumerable petty differences with France all over the world, which had more than once

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threatened to cause a senseless war, it was bound in honor (in fact by an agreement not then made public) to give diplomatic support to France in Morocco. Roosevelt half suspected that Great Britain would have welcomed war while the German Navy had not come to full strength; but of course the peril to Great Britain if Germany, when bitterly hostile to her, had conquered France would have been a standing evil, which no temporary naval triumph, however great, could have compensated.

Roosevelt was loath to take a part in the matter, for the interest of America was at the outset only that of any country, with a growing commerce, not wishful to be, by any new arrangement, excluded from Morocco or anywhere else. But he would of course do whatever might lie with him to stave off a world war, and he was anxious for the safety of France. His opinion at the moment about the attitude of Germany and, as has just been shown, of England, was not unnaturally somewhat perplexed. He was ably supported by Mr. Root, who had succeeded the dying John Hay early in 1905; and greatly helped by the wisdom and honesty of Monsieur Jusserand and Baron Speck von Sternburg, the French and German ambassadors, both dear friends of his. When he became convinced that

the acceptance of the conference by France was the best way of avoiding war, he persuaded France to accept it; during the conference he further persuaded her to accept obviously just conditions in favor of nations other than herself and Spain in Morocco; and, France having readily agreed, he absolutely deterred Germany and Austria from the attempt to force upon her further concessions which would have been humiliating and were meant to open the door for future trouble. Other openings for trouble were soon found, and the Great War came eight years later; but it is clear upon the records that he more than any other man staved off the catastrophe then.

It is impossible to me not to observe with the deepest regret the comment upon this transaction of the American writer and the living historian whom I esteem most highly — one who elsewhere expresses particular pride in his country's "work towards the elevation of humanity." "It would," he writes, "I think have been better for Roosevelt . . . absolutely to refuse to interfere in a European dispute"; and there follow quotations from oddly chosen English authorities, to justify a view no less superficial than cynical of the peoples from whose struggles and agonies he would hold righteously aloof. Even so did the Priest and the Levite "pass

by on the other side"; and yet Mr. Rhodes is neither a Priest nor a Levite.

It has already been mentioned that in 1906 Roosevelt had to intervene in Cuba, where certain disturbances were quieted down under the supervision at first of Mr. Taft, then Secretary of War, who was sent there. In 1905, trouble which threatened between San Domingo and its foreign creditors was quietly and permanently settled to the profit of the island as well as its creditors by sending an officer to control the customs-house. The Senate held up for a time a treaty to provide for this. The President meanwhile acted without the treaty, claiming that it was within his Constitutional powers, as not having been forbidden. Among his lesser acts it should be mentioned that very early he had shown in a most effective fashion his care for the cause of international arbitration, though he justly felt certain difficulties which made caution in it necessary for the present. Anxious that the new Hague Tribunal should be made effective, he gave the first example of having recourse to it by searching out a dispute (one with Mexico) which the United States could submit to it.

At a later period he was busy in promoting the Second Hague Convention, gracefully setting aside a suggestion that he should summon it, in order to



leave that office to the Czar of Russia, then recently humiliated by the Japanese War; and was busy also with certain arbitration treaties, of which the merits and the fate need not perhaps here trouble us. He himself sincerely felt that his most important service to peace was the voyage round the world upon which he sent the American battle-fleet. This great feat, as in a technical, naval sense it was understood to have been at the time, was actually expected by some observers to provoke an outbreak of war with Japan. Far from having any such result, the visits of the fleet were, in a strange but very intelligible fashion, a cause of friendly feeling in Japan, in Australia, and wherever it went. Of course it made the world more aware that in any very great struggle America counted. Since America desired peace, that was well. It was still more his aim to make his own people conscious of their strength and responsibilities, and of their neighbors.

This catalogue may fitly close by recording that, having supported John Hay in asserting the principle of the "Open Door" — instead of rapine and dismemberment — in China, at the close of his Presidency he set an example to the Christian nations by devoting to purposes for the benefit of the Chinese people the still large unpaid bal-

ance of the indemnity due from their government.

Shortly afterwards his power was at an end. Immediately upon his election, in 1904, he had announced that he should not be a candidate again. It had been urged upon him that the usage which had hitherto debarred any President from a third term did not apply to a man who had only once been elected as President. But in his view that usage was justified chiefly by the influence which a President long in office might exercise to secure reëlection. So he debarred himself forthwith from standing again in 1908, and, when the time came, resolutely stopped the attempt to force him forward. Literally his words would have applied to any later election; but his reason for them certainly did not. It was suggested to him that he should make it clear that he would be willing to be renominated later on; but he could not wisely refer at all to things so far ahead. It was not fair that, in the events which later happened, his own "self-denying ordinance," which he had amply fulfilled in the spirit, should be brought up against him as requiring a further self-effacement.

His work, conceived in no contentious temper, had only been put through by great masterfulness. He had really, and one would suppose beneficially, developed the powers inherent in his office, by

doing much which seemed to him to fall naturally within the scope of the Executive, and of which there was no actual prohibition. It seems to have been sometimes feared that some President would make his office a sort of plebiscitary monarchy like that of Napoleon III, by always appealing to popular feeling to coerce the authorities constitutionally coordinate with him. The best possible critics have denied that any danger of this lay in Roosevelt. But of late he had lived in growing conflict with House and Senate, in which, till his term of office was expiring, he generally prevailed. It was, one must suppose, good that there should be a change and that the hope, originally his, of harmonious fellow-working should be restored. In any case it can seldom be good for the man, and never for the nation, that the great burden should rest on one pair of shoulders uninterruptedly for many years. But the work which he passed on accomplished was such that, looking back over forty years at least, it would be impossible to attribute to any other statesman in the world success more remarkable or more pure.

With his blustering, genial efficacy, and with manner and looks that lent themselves to caricature, — though it might most times be kindly, — with his directness that could be rasping, with his

honest catchwords, — the "square deal" and that rather tiresome "big stick" which got associated with the "mailed fist" and "shining armor," — his outer man came to bulk so big under the lime-light that neither the spirit within nor the real deeds done were duly noted in his day. So at least it was with those who watched him across the ocean. Yet in fact he had at home given a lead to general progress which it had sorely needed, had done service to the poor, had advanced industrial peace, and worked for unity between races and classes. And the warm blood, the love of fact, the alert sympathies, which had helped him in this, had carried his services beyond his native shores. He had made his country safer and stronger, and had involved it in no foreign entanglement, even as he himself had never diluted his cherished "Americanism" with any partiality for any one country abroad; but he had built up the respect in which America was held; and, steering the difficult middle way between quixotic or meddlesome adventure and callous unhelpfulness, he had labored truly for the cause which he defined as "the peace of righteousness." He had groped a little and very cautiously toward some new world-order which he knew to be far away, but he had actively engendered its prerequisite and its purpose — the spirit of

friendship. It is ill to praise a famous man to the disparagement of the unseen hundreds who have worked beside him, but, before that power ended of which there could be no return, he had done a man's part for the secure prosperity of America and for the other and indefinable thing which can make countries, great or small, illustrious.