

**NAPOLEON III. AND
AMERICAN DIPLOMACY
AT THE OUTBREAK OF THE
CIVIL WAR**

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Napoleon III. and American diplomacy at the outbreak of the civil war by Lewis Einstein

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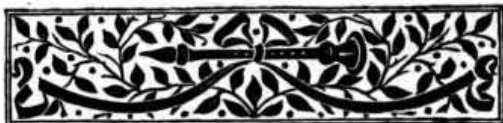
NAPOLEON III. AND AMERICAN
DIPLOMACY AT THE OUTBREAK
OF THE CIVIL WAR.
BY LEWIS EINSTEIN.

*An Address read in French before the
Société d'Histoire Diplomatique at Paris,
on the Ninth of June, 1905.*

LONDON.

1905.

W.A.C.L.
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WHEN the passions of men have once been deeply stirred in civil strife, it is rare that the same generation which has fought in battle should later join in friendship, its ties reunited over fallen comrades. Nor is it least of America's claims that she has healed every wound of

war and left conquerors and conquered rightly proud of their share in a conflict from which all sting of bitterness has disappeared. Just as the veterans of North and South have met as friends on former battlefields so both sides can now look back and see in Napoleon's desire to aid the Confederacy the proof of sympathy extended to a great section of the American people in a cause which it believed righteous.

After well nigh half a century it is easy to recognize the impression created abroad by the Federal Government's indecision on the eve of the Civil War. If republican institutions had always seemed in the nature of an experiment to European statesmen, their sudden lack of stability appeared to justify every misgiving. It must be confessed that the want of real insight which so often makes nations, like individuals, misjudge each other, was not here to blame. The spectacle of four years' governmental

impotence had just been witnessed in America. Prominent public men, either by timidity or else imbued with the innocuous liberalism of that period, declared it barbarous to forcibly retain unwilling members in a union of States which had fought under a common flag ; and our Legations in Europe spread the belief that though disunion might be deprecated, force would not be invoked to prevent it. This impression of Northern indecision and of consequent Northern failure, could only have been corroborated by the despatches foreign envoys sent from Washington, where the circles in which they moved were then slave-holding in sympathy. If a European diplomatist cast his eyes to the other side of the Potomac in contradiction with the North, he would have seen the South presenting a solid front, and heard each State's sovereign right to secede loudly proclaimed by its leaders and scarcely denied even by those who upheld the Union. If he read the

Constitution of the United States he must have realized that by the letter of its law, the Confederates possessed a legal justification in secession. If on the other hand, he turned to the new government at Washington, he saw only an untried Administration at the helm. In the White House itself, was a raw-boned giant, born in a log cabin in the wilderness, the son of an illiterate frontiersman, brought to power almost by an accident, as the head of a new party which was causing the South, with its political traditions dating back from the beginning of the Republic, to secede. If, finally, he examined the armed forces at the Government's disposal, he saw its strongest arsenals already in hostile hands, and the foremost officers in the Army, like Robert Lee, refusing commands and resigning commissions to follow their native State. And he was soon to witness, as if in fulfilment of expectation, the first military success crowning the Southern cause, and the raw

levies of the North hurled back by the equally raw levies of the South. It is no wonder that diplomatists at Washington sent reports to their Governments tinged with the belief in the imminent breaking up of the Republic. Napoleon frankly told the American Minister at Paris, that he believed the Union cause would never succeed, an opinion, he said, shared by European statesmen. And Europe, thus expecting Southern success, manifested Southern sympathy.

If at the outbreak of the Civil War the Old World misjudged the strength and purpose of the North, the North likewise underrated the causes which would have influenced its goodwill. By making the war a crusade against slavery, it could have aroused such popular feeling abroad that no Government would have cared to face the indignation of its subjects by siding with the South. But the moment was not yet ripe for this, and to save the

border States where Union feeling was strong, but where slavery was also regarded as a fundamental institution, the question of abolition had to be kept in the background. Hence, instead of the North claiming the benefit of foreign opinion, Europe largely accepted the Southern plea, that in the spirit of their ancestors of 1776 they were fighting for liberty and self-government, and it gave them that sympathy which those who claim oppression will always receive.

To guide the foreign policy of the nation, Lincoln selected for Secretary of State, William F. Seward, long prominent in public life as Governor of New York, later as United States Senator, and his own unsuccessful opponent at the Presidential Convention. It is at all times paltry acknowledgment of the value of any man to dismiss his life work in a sentence. Especially is this true of one like Seward. The evolution which the responsibilities of his new office were to effect on him