A HISTORY OF EUROPEAN DIPLOMACY, 1815-1914

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A History of European Diplomacy, 1815-1914 by R. B. Mowat

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PREFACE

Now that foreign affairs are, as Disraeli said, merely Britain's domestic affairs in foreign parts, it is the duty of every citizen to know about them and to reflect upon them. Things apparently remote from foreign policy must be regarded in the light of our external relations as well as of our internal situation. And it is not merely the relations of Britain to other countries that the British citizen must know about; he must understand the dealings of the other states of Europe and of the world with each other; for the affairs of all the nations are so interwoven that no nation, and no part of any nation, can for a moment live unto itself.

It is with the modest aim of contributing something towards political education that this book has been written. I have tried to continue in a more accessible form the admirable work accomplished by the Strasbourg Professor Koch, author of the Histoire abrégé des traités de paix, for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In England we have for the nineteenth century the grand collection of Hertslet-treaties and maps, with neither comment nor narrative: a great repository of truth, but of use mainly for scholars. In France M. Bourgeois, in his Manuel historique de politique étrangère, and M. Debidour, in his Histoire diplomatique, have placed before their public the results of long study and wide observation. I have aimed at doing something like this for the British citizen: to place before him a hundred years of the diplomatic relations of the chief Powers of Europe, including Great Britain, and so to give him the means of following the stream of history that flows before his own eyes from day to day, and of forming sound judgments about it.

In the quiet of an Oxford College a historian can reasonably profess to write "without hatred and partisanship," sine ira et studio. If he still believes in the honour and dignity of his country, it is because study and observation confirm him in this view. The aim of diplomacy is peace and good-fellowship: the normal diplomatist has always been an honourable man; and this is true, on the whole, both of Continental and of British diplomacy. Practical experience of British diplomacy at a significant period of this country's history has confirmed the conclusion formed from study, namely that British men of affairs, the statesmen, diplomatists, and administrators, have the same standard of conduct in managing international affairs as they have in their private dealings. But they cannot go on with their work and maintain its honourable standard unless the people behind them know that they are honest and will honestly support them. Such is the idea which, I trust, will be gleaned from this book.

R. B. MOWAT.

CORPUS CHEISTI COLLEGE, OXFORD.

September, 1922.

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A HISTORY OF EUROPEAN DIPLOMACY, 1815-1914

PART I

From the Congress of Vienna to the Congress or Paris

CHAPTER I

THE DIPLOMATIC PROFESSION

"There is a European atmosphere. The same ideas are spread everywhere: they are all French, and find naturally in France their most perfect expression." This European atmosphere is the greatest achievement of civilisation; and in spite of wars and furious national rivalries it has existed since the eleventh century. It is evinced in the common observances of religious worship, in community of scholarship and learning, and in a definite standard of conduct and manners. It is this European atmosphere that has led the Powers of Europe to regard themselves as a society of States, who in normal times conduct themselves towards one another with the same courtesy and morality as individuals within a State observe in their mutual transactions. The manners of this society of States is what we mean by Diplomacy.

The French have always been the greatest exponents of the diplomatic art; and among the many gifts which that grand nation has conferred upon Europe there is none more fruitful than this. They have not shone with the same luminousness in the domain of International Law, which differs from, and stands in relation to, Diplomacy, in the same way as ordinary municipal law differs from,

Sorel: L'Europe et la Révolution Française (1912), I, 147.