

I

THE CONGRESS OF VIENNA

A NOVELIST of his day said of Lamartine that he had raised History to the level of Fiction. The fear of earning similar praise has made many another historian tell a simple story of events which sometimes seem unrelated to all that came before or after. But in stern times like these it is more than ever evident, as Morley has so finely said, that "We are all of us a good many hundreds of thousands of years old two minutes after we find our way into the mid-wife's arms," and also this from the same wise man, that "Progress is a working belief that the modern world will never consent to do without." The historian may safely write in the light of this belief, if he only keep in mind what Oliver Cromwell said to the Presbyterian elders, "My brethren, in the name of Christ, I beseech you to think it possible that you may be mistaken!"

To judge the work of statesmen by future events to them unknown or only dimly guessed seems scarcely fair; and yet it is the only test which can ever be applied. All statesmanship must ever have something of the prophetic quality. The judgment of posterity is the truest measure of a man's greatness. Did he read aright the principles of progress and of life? Did he guide his own generation in such a way as to prepare the way for other generations to live in better times? Or did he only solve the immediate problem and leave his real task to be performed by some wiser man? These are the questions which we must ask of the men of other ages;

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and especially in these days, when surely another peace conference will be meeting, these are the questions which we must ask of Metternich, of Talleyrand, of Napoleon, and of Disraeli.

History is the study of some period in the life of men in the light of some future. Every day throws all the past into new perspective and demands a new emphasis and a new explanation. Incidents and men which seemed insignificant yesterday, to-day are chosen as the important realities of their times. It is for this reason that even if no new documents are brought to light and no new episodes are discovered, there must ever be a new history in every age. The supreme function of the historian as distinguished from the mere annalist is always selective. He does not necessarily take his stand on the present or the imagined future and select his past to explain that present or future, but he must inevitably take that stand on some position beyond the one he is describing. Otherwise there is no possibility of feeling the sweep of events or of choosing any scheme to reduce their multiplicity to order. And the surest and most interesting standpoint for the study of any period, however remote, is usually either the present or some period not too distant which is still living in imagination with all the rich connotations of reality.

No one can hope that historical work will really be final any more than one can hope that work in any living science will be final. To-morrow and day after to-morrow our history will inevitably be different, not only in the extent of its content but also in its fundamental and scarcely defined point of selection. Even the scientific German historians were absolutely unable to tell the story of the Roman Empire or of the Papacy without showing in every line what it was which had significance for their own age. Complete detach-

ment would be not a virtue but a calamity, for at the best even truth is necessarily relative.

It is this never ending and seemingly hopeless quest which makes history neither the past life of man itself, for that is too vast and beyond discovery, nor the documents and books which are stored up in musty libraries, important and forgotten, but a living study of a past which shall illumine and give hope and significance to some present, either lingering in our memories of yesterday or yet only dimly realized and expected. In his forward look the historian is like the statesman, and History stands like Statesmanship with the ruddy glow of the dawn of future ages shining on her upturned face.

In such a spirit, when the next great peace congress shall meet, to-morrow or day after to-morrow, whether it shall go down into history as the Congress of Amsterdam, or Madrid, or Antwerp is comparatively insignificant. What will really matter is whether it has within it enough of genius and good will to make its work a landmark in the progress of the human spirit. How will it differ in the men who compose it, in the methods which they pursue, in the principles which guide them, and in the ends which they achieve from those five or six great congresses of other ages?

Before the time of the Thirty Years' War there were no international congresses for the very good reason that nations and states in the modern sense of these terms were just crystallizing out of the welter of the Middle Ages. We are so familiar with the idea of a state living its more or less sovereign life among its fellows that it is easy to forget what a really new thing is a world composed of separate states living together in a family, with their rivalries and quarrels, and with the necessity of building up a new code of morals, or of law, corresponding to the older, ever changing means

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of social control of individuals which have been building from the earliest days of human society. The ancient world knew either tribes which were regularly at war with all alien tribes and which were not limited by any such modern inventions as definite territorial limits or frontiers, or else it knew great empires which united all these racial groups by military prowess and by the fiction of common heritage. The intense rivalry of wandering tribes reappeared in the Middle Ages, and seemed to swallow all there was of civilization in the devouring flood of their invasions. The old idea of unity still lived on in theory in the Holy Roman Empire, whose essential qualities were best described in the famous sarcasm of Voltaire. But order reappeared only when tribes had succumbed to those warlike rulers, the nobles, and these in turn had been united by the prowess and the paid armies of the kings, the real founders of that very modern human institution which we call the State. A state, in the sense of a group of people living together within a definite territory, having an orderly civilization, and bound together by the invisible bond of a common allegiance and a common loyalty, certainly did not exist on the face of the earth much before the beginning of the seventeenth century. There were, of course, groups of people who already had many of the marks of the state, but in a general sense it is safe to say that men knew kings, and churches, and families, and tribes, and empires long before they knew states; and even in the sixteenth century no amount of explanation could really have made a man understand what we now mean by patriotism, nor why the Englishman stands with uncovered head at the strains of his national anthem, nor what the Stars and Stripes means to an American. For these are ideas which belong to the realm of deep feeling rather than of pure reason, and are not to be reduced to the cold limits of a syllogism.

The Congress of Westphalia, which closed in 1648, was the first great international congress of any kind. For this reason alone it is certainly one of the supremely significant events in the history of the world. Although some of its problems now seem remote, yet it is to be remembered as the mark of a new era, and, if for nothing else, as the point at which the influence of that great jurist, Hugo Grotius, began to teach men new ideas of international right and wrong at the very dawn of the society of nations. In the following century another congress sat at Utrecht, settling affairs of great moment to the powers involved, and furnishing another early precedent for the international congresses which were to be so important a feature of European history in the age of Metternich. These earlier congresses were genuinely international, but, in their composition and their etiquette, they sometimes seemed assemblies of princes and kings rather than gatherings of sovereign and independent nations. Their problems, too, have something of the mediæval flavor. It is only when we get to the Congress of Vienna that we meet our distinctively modern problems and find as if in solution those ideas which are the centre of the immense conflict of to-day.

The world had gone a long distance forward in the hundred years which lay between Utrecht and Vienna. At Utrecht the slave trade was still regarded merely as a valuable commercial privilege which bore no relation at all to morals or to law. England sought and gained for herself the monopoly of the trade between Africa and the Spanish empire in America. At Vienna, the English representatives, under the influence of Wilberforce, took the lead in securing the passage of a resolution in which all the states promised to do their best to secure the abolition of the iniquitous business. The promise was none too definite, since no special

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date was mentioned at which it was to be fulfilled; but in spite of this defect it was clearly a step in advance. Just as the humanitarian ideas of which Bentham was the prophet were behind this provision, so the influence of Adam Smith and the classical economists appeared in the measure, also adopted unanimously, that international rivers should be open to the commerce of all. This idea applied especially to the Rhine, and has since been greatly expanded in special treaties. It is under this principle that American vessels have free passage through the waters of the St. Lawrence, and that most of the other great rivers of the world are open to the commerce of the nations. The opening of the Scheldt, by which Antwerp gained access to the sea, had been bitterly opposed by England for fear that the Belgian city might come to be a rival to her own great port of London. This had been one of the reasons which had led her to declare war against the French Republic in 1793. But now all were willing to have this very important river, which rises in Belgium and reaches the sea in Holland, made one of the great doors which lead into northern Europe. As a result, at the opening of the present war Antwerp had become the third port in the world. The nations which are to-day fighting for the redemption of Antwerp are in reality fighting for a principle which was definitely established at the Congress of Vienna. In opening the rivers the congress was really saying that above the special interests and desires of each individual state there are rights which belong to all. It was the first small plank in a common law for the nations which was to serve as a limitation on the idea of absolute and unlimited sovereignty. And it takes no great prophet to foresee that the time will come, however slowly, when states will recognize that complete sovereignty is as impossible in

a world of other states as complete liberty is to the individual in a society of other individuals.

The occasion for the Congress of Vienna was as dramatic as it well could be. Only two years before it opened, Napoleon had entered Russia on the expedition which was to light the flame of national patriotism among the blazing ruins of Moscow. What kings had been unable to accomplish, the aroused people of Europe *did* at the Battle of the Nations, which set the seal of defeat on the grand army of the Empire and drove its once invincible hosts in flight back across the Rhine, on that perhaps most memorable of all October days, just a year before our diplomats arrived at Vienna. The military genius of the great soldier was never quite so supremely great as it was in the marvellous campaign in which he sought to stave off the inevitable and to save his capital and his throne. Fighting against vastly superior numbers, he balked and then defeated them, causing them to fall back by the rapier-like thrust of his little army against their line of communications, until finally the supreme gambler had played his last card and his enemies had bivouacked in triumph in the streets of Paris. Even then, in utter disregard of human life, he would have thrown his brave men on the entrenchments of his own late capital if it had not been for the defection of Marshal Marmont. "I am still the man of Wagram and of Austerlitz!" he exclaimed when he heard that Paris had fallen; and even with his abdication signed he sprang from his seat and said to his assembled marshals, who had certainly served him well on many a hard-fought field: "Gentlemen, let us tear it up. We can beat them yet." But they were disillusioned, discouraged, and inexorable, and so the man of Wagram became for the moment the man of Elba.

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When Paris was about to fall, Napoleon had ordered all his official family to leave the city and to join him outside. Among them was Talleyrand, who had been the grand chamberlain of the empire ever since it was created in 1804. Talleyrand was one of those adroit men to whom accidents always happen opportunely. During the trial of Louis XVI the famous chest was discovered back of the wainscoting where the royal carpenter had placed it with all its incriminating documents. Among the contents were papers which our good bishop of Autun might have found most difficult to explain to the satisfaction of even so mild a man as Roland. For Talleyrand was not only a bishop, having been kept from the army in his youth by a hereditary lameness, but he was also the chief author of the famous civil constitution of the clergy, which placed the priests under the control of the state. At the very moment when he was carefully buttering his bread on one side by this very radical measure, he was also in communication with the royal family, trying to help Mirabeau to preserve the monarchy in some more satisfactory and constitutional guise. Letters to royal personages, however innocent they might have seemed when written, were evidently not good forms of life insurance in the year of the September massacres, when France was surrounded by her enemies and when great Danton was arousing her to action with his "L'audace, encore l'audace, toujours l'audace, et la France est sauvée!" Fortunately for him, when these embarrassing letters fell into the hands of Roland, Talleyrand was also helping to save France on an unofficial diplomatic mission at London. If Louis had not been guillotined, as he so richly deserved to be, Talleyrand *might* have persuaded Pitt to keep England out of the war and so changed greatly the course of human history. It is probable that even then the Scheldt might have rankled in her generous

soul even more than the death of the stupid king. However that might have been, Talleyrand failed in his first important diplomatic venture not because he was not a great diplomat, but because the stars in their courses had fought against him, as they have frequently done against other lesser diplomats before and since.

Needless to say, our bland bishop with the club-foot did not return to Paris. Instead he travelled for his health in America, living in Philadelphia, seeing everything which might be learned superficially, and failing wholly to understand the spirit of the young Republic, as he showed soon after his return to France. There times had greatly changed. Danton and Robespierre were dead. The cannon of Vendémiaire had awakened France from her dreams. Talleyrand became the minister of foreign affairs in the Directory. It was in this connection that he appears in American history as the central figure of the incident of the "X Y Z" despatches. His utter contempt for the American representatives, who came to secure some redress for the injuries which their neutral commerce was suffering at the hands of France, his attempts to turn their plea to his own financial account through blackmail, the ringing words of President Adams, and the naval war which followed are the subjects of another story.

Talleyrand's picture has been drawn in two chapters of Carlyle's great epic. He first appears in "The Procession" as one of the members of the National Assembly, and again his very soul is placed before us in the passage in which the Scotch historian describes the strange Festival of the Confederation, that assembly in which was celebrated the fall of the Bastille. Talleyrand ascended the elevated altar in the midst of the pouring rain, in full canonicals, his mitre on his head, and around his waist the tricolored sash of the nation.

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It was on this occasion that he is said to have turned to one of his companions, just as the solemn religious festival was about to begin, and whispered: "Don't make me laugh!"

Napoleon himself has left on record a short and pithy character sketch of his minister. On their last interview in 1814 he said: "You are a coward, a liar, a thief. You do not believe even in God. You would sell your own father." But then Napoleon may have been prejudiced, though he certainly had every reason to recognize a master liar when he saw one, belonging himself to the very first rank of the great liars of history. Talleyrand, like Fouché, had been a man of too keen intellectual powers to serve even a master like Napoleon blindly. He used his important position to secure for himself a great fortune extracted from the unlucky princes along the Rhine who lost their estates to make room for the simpler administrative arrangements which Napoleon determined to introduce. But he recognized far sooner than his master the strength of the dawning spirit of nationality. He advised Napoleon against his Spanish adventure, and later, at the time of the expedition into Russia, said, "This is the beginning of the end!" Napoleon resented his advice, and in a spirit of sardonic humor made his disgraced minister the unwilling host of the Spanish princes kidnapped at Bayonne. Talleyrand was compelled to entertain them in his country palace, and he well knew that his own safety depended on the care with which he guarded Charles and Ferdinand. His master added insult to injury by commanding the former bishop to marry the lady with whom scandal had connected his name. Evidently the two men had only small reason to love each other. But with all the servant's avarice and hypocrisy, this much we can say for him which we could not say for the greater man. He always loved France well, and when the moment came

he served her with the full measure of devotion. And never more so than in those busy months at Vienna, when he, the master intriguer of his age, always excepting his rival Fouché, for the lily may not be painted, rose to heights of statesmanship which have placed all future ages in his debt, and which set France, doubly defeated and discredited as she was, high at the council table of the nations. So complex are the strands which enter into human character, that we might picture Talleyrand either as a contemptible villain or as the hero of a great historic drama, in either case with almost equal truth. To Carlyle a man must be either a hero or a fool. Fortunately, in history as in life, the hero and the fool often live together in the same man, all logic to the contrary notwithstanding.

Napoleon never liked or trusted Talleyrand, and yet he could not get along without him. He used him as foreign minister under the Consulate, then made him grand chancellor of the empire at a salary of half a million francs, and later placed him in the Principality of Benevento, a dangerous honor of which Talleyrand managed to get rid just before he was to take still a new rôle in the drama of the times.

And so it happened that when all the other ministers of Napoleon left Paris, adroit unlucky Talleyrand reached the barrier just too late and was turned back. So, too, when the allies entered Paris in triumph, there was our good friend Talleyrand, the one important man in the capital, ready to be the host of Alexander, whom he had met before, and, above all, ready to give wise advice as to the new order of things both in France and in Europe. And he had to deal with two men quite as remarkable in their own way as himself. There was Metternich, the man of principle, minister in chief to an old woman called Francis of Austria. And there, too, was Alexander, Czar of all the Russias, the man

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of visions and of dreams. A new Joseph was required who could state the principle and interpret the visions, and yet make all serve France. And Talleyrand, who had been pondering these things in his heart for six long years while he served as an unwilling jailer, was not unequal to the task. The principle was the idea of legitimacy and the dream was a dream of peace and of eternal good will.

Next to Talleyrand, the most interesting figure at the congress was the emperor Alexander I, who had been the Czar of Russia since 1801. Napoleon, who was a keen judge of men, said of Alexander: "With so many intellectual advantages and dazzling qualities, . . . there is always something lacking in him, . . . and that which is lacking changes perpetually." He was a man of very great personal charm, and considerable personal vanity. He seized upon ideas as with a sudden inspiration, and with the greatest eagerness. He passed from one idea which he regarded as a fundamental truth to its exact opposite by intermediate steps of which he was not conscious. Alexander loved truly the two ideas of liberty and order. Could they be reconciled? Metternich was sure that they could not, and never wavered in his preference for an order based on historic institutions and historic obligations. Alexander thought that liberty might be made to fall like the gentle showers from kingly heavens upon the waiting people. He found instead that it welled up in a mighty torrent, creative and destructive at the same time. It would not obey the voice of single men, however divinely sent to control its floods. And so the liberal mood passed into one of reactionary gloom.

Alexander had been brought up at the court of his grandmother, the notorious and brilliant Catharine II. Between his grandmother and his father, Paul, there existed the most violent antipathy. Paul was a whimsical lunatic, like his son

Constantine after him, and Catharine, who, in spite of her notorious immorality, had much of the far-sighted statesmanship of the wide-eyed Elizabeth, was determined that he should never succeed her as the ruler of Russia. She loved Alexander with all that was best in her strong nature, and intended him to be her heir. But the boy had in him a certain filial loyalty which would not let him supplant his father. There is something pitiful in the way in which the old woman, hard and self-sufficient as she was to all the rest of the world, tried in vain to gain her grandson's respect and affection. But he always resented his enforced separation from his father and mother, and must have come early to understand something of the air of intrigue and wickedness which surrounded his imperial grandmother's throne. He therefore gave his boyish loyalty and full devotion to his tutor, the Swiss La Harpe. La Harpe was an idealist and a political liberal, and he gained an influence over his young pupil's mind which Alexander was never able to shake off. Even after La Harpe was deemed too radical and dismissed, the man and the boy kept up an intimate correspondence; and to this day the letters of Alexander to La Harpe are among the most interesting of unconscious self-revelations. From his tutor the boy learned simple tastes and a certain genuine purity and nobility of character. He became a liberal in feeling, and in later years his life was a constant conflict between what he thought were his convictions and the necessities which were pressed upon him by his family and position.

When Alexander was eighteen years of age, Catharine died, full of dread for the years ahead and certain of her own high place in the history of Russia. The five years of Paul's mad reign were a terrible experience to his son no less than to Russia. Catharine had been sensual and ruthless,

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but she was also strong, far-seeing, statesmanlike. Paul was a madman with imperial power. One can guess something of the contents of those five years when we know that until recently all mention of his acts and of his tragic death has been under the ban of the most absolute censorship in Russia. If one finds disorder in the Russia of to-day, it does not necessarily prove that there is too much democracy now, but rather perhaps that in other days there has been too little. And every day of anarchy among a people breaking their bonds and struggling into light can be matched by years of tyranny and sore oppression under kings whose title went straight back to God himself. We cannot judge aright these bitter days unless we remember also the burden and the woe of those long and very bitter years. And one may hope still that out of the ashes and the bloodshed of this wicked war there may yet arise a Russia with a new glory blazing in her kindled soul.

Paul was determined that his son should not gain any popularity at his expense, and with mad cunning he made the boy, who was only twenty, chief of police in St. Petersburg. In this capacity Alexander was compelled to sign orders of banishment and death for people whom he knew to be innocent, "that all may see that you and I breathe with the same spirit," as Paul said to his son. Paul reduced the required service of the peasants to three days a week, and when they refused to be grateful and insisted on revolting, he had them executed and buried outside the cemetery walls with an epitaph over their graves: "Here lie criminals before the Lord, the Czar, and the landowners, justly punished according to God's law." Citizens were punished for wearing round hats and top-boots which came from France. Thousands were executed for failing to kneel when the imperial carriage passed. In his last escapade Paul fell

under the sinister influence of Napoleon and sent an expedition of forty thousand Cossacks across the plains and mountains to wrest India from the British. Each Cossack had two horses but no forage or provisions. In obedience to their Little Father, they went out into the barren steppes to die, forerunners of those other Russian armies of later days, which by the insane stupidity or treachery of their superiors were to die without food in the Crimea, or without ammunition in Manchuria, or without guns on the slopes of the Carpathians.

Finally Alexander yielded to the courtiers and reluctantly entered a conspiracy. It seems that his father's blood does not rest upon his memory. He had promised to become czar if his father's personal safety were secured. That night Paul was dethroned and murdered, and this event cast a gloom over Alexander's sensitive and naturally affectionate nature which clouded all his days. He could not punish the murderers, for they were his fellow conspirators and friends, and Russia was then, as ever, in reality an oligarchy with the forms of royalty. But he never ceased to blame himself for his father's death.

All this had happened fourteen years before Alexander arrived, last of the important figures who gathered at Vienna. He had already shown considerable diplomatic skill, especially when he gained Bessarabia from Turkey, and Finland from Sweden, and yet managed to keep both countries on his side in his impending war with Napoleon. In his own country, Alexander had proved sometimes as absolute as Catharine, again as liberal as his good old friend La Harpe. To each mood was added much of the mysticism of all the Romanoffs. With all his brilliance and his charm, was there also in his melancholy something of his father's and his brother's madness? It may well have been. He

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came to Vienna in person to make sure that Russia received as an independent kingdom the whole of Poland which was already occupied by his armies, and to see that his friends, the kings of Sweden and of Prussia, were properly rewarded for the sacrifices which he had called on them to make. He was determined that Bernadotte should not fail to get Norway, and that Prussia should be rewarded for the loss of her Polish provinces at the expense of the unlucky King of Saxony. For bargains are bargains, and doubtless Alexander had learned from La Harpe that honor is a duty even among kings.

The Czar found all Europe gathered at Vienna when he arrived,—all Europe, it must be said, with three or four quite significant exceptions. For example, among the absent there was the protector of the faithful, Mahmoud II, Sultan of Turkey, who was not concerned at all with the business in hand, since Alexander had already got Bessarabia by the treaty of Bucharest in 1812. Then there were those who were quite too intimately concerned to be comfortable companions. Conspicuous by their absence from so brilliant an assembly of more than a hundred kings, princes, and great diplomats were the King of Saxony, for he was confidently expected to furnish the entrée for the gathering, and the King of Denmark, an old friend of Napoleon's who was counted on to supply the dessert. For our diplomats were distinctly not there for their health. In much the same class was Murat, the King of Naples, whose plebeian origin and family connection with the deposed Emperor would be especially hard to tuck safely under Talleyrand's warm bed-quilt of legitimacy. And among the exceptions we must not forget the King of Elba, late Bonaparte, master of the destinies of Europe, now busy with his gardening. He was

not invited, but, not standing on any ceremony, was doubtless planning even then to be on time to break up the party.

All that summer which lay between the preliminary arrangements by which eight powers signed the peace of Paris and the great meeting of the diplomats at Vienna was a time full of high hopes and expectations among the liberals of Europe. By some wonderful magic, arrangements were to be made which would forever reconcile the two principles of liberty and order. From the standpoint of to-day we can readily see what were the real consequences of the Napoleonic era in Europe. These, beyond any question, are the reestablishment of the British empire, whose foundations had been severely shaken in the American war; the awakening of the spirit of nationality, especially in Germany under the burning words of Fichte and the great leadership of Stein; and the spread of the French notions of constitutional liberty and equality. Russia, Germany, Italy, and France could never be again what they had been before. But the men who went to Vienna were too close to these results to see them in their full significance, and the event showed that much of what the liberals desired was to be postponed to other days, and that they must win their goal by their own efforts. To Metternich it seemed that the world wanted peace and not liberty. The past, and not the future, became the guide of the deliberations, and Chateaubriand, with his shallow notions, was their prophet. The same love for an idealized past, a past full of gallant knights and gentle ladies dealing kindly with an essentially inferior population, which produced such remarkable effects in religion and in literature, was also the sentimental notion which replaced Louis XVIII on his throne and which led the authors of the restoration to see, or rather to pretend to see, in the indolent,

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clever, and gouty king a true representative of kingly heroism. The age of Napoleon seemed a time full of sound and fury. Men remembered how in the spring of 1813 the peasants of two provinces of Russia had gathered up the bodies of more than ninety thousand men which had been lying all winter unburied in the snow. The past alone had healing for the wounds of the present.

The idea of legitimacy, of which Talleyrand was the author, and which he used so cleverly for his own purposes, was readily accepted by Metternich as the exact statement of his own most profound convictions. To Talleyrand it was a weapon which might well serve his ends and then be modified and even discarded without a tear. But to Metternich it was an abiding principle of action from which he never consciously swerved and which he believed in just as truly when, many years later, it drove him in flight from Vienna, as he did when it was first declared as the fundamental policy of the Congress of Vienna. "I do not know how to compromise," he wrote in 1848 to Nicholas of Russia, and his whole career was a commentary on this statement. If loyalty and sincerity are the supreme ethical qualities, then Metternich was a virtuous man. In a spirit of perfect consistency he later framed the doctrine of intervention which sent an Austrian army to restore Ferdinand of Naples to his absolute authority, and a French army across the Pyrenees into Spain to put down revolution there. This same idea of legitimacy also made Metternich unwilling to have anything to do with the rising rebellion in Greece which was to begin the dismemberment of the Turkish empire and to introduce the so-called Eastern Question into the deliberations of Europe.

But this principle as it was first explained by Talleyrand to Alexander in Paris was not necessarily the wholly

reactionary idea which it became in the hands of the relentless Metternich. It meant simply that mere conquest should not be allowed to give title in a well-ordered world. Changes in the shape and size of states should be based upon broad historic considerations. Although it was actually invoked to safeguard the property rights of certain kings in their governments, it is essentially capable of being used to-day in a modified form which is, after all, not so very different from Talleyrand's first version. Its spirit would say to an assembled world to-day, not what Metternich made it say in the two decades after the Congress of Vienna, "Kings shall never be dethroned," but rather this: "Power alone shall not settle the question of Belgium. National rights, popular aspiration, legitimate economic hopes must determine the ownership of Macedonia, of Trieste and the Dalmatian coast." And interpreted thus in the interests of people, and not of kings and governments, it is yet a principle to which every thoughtful liberal might well subscribe.

At Vienna this idea of legitimacy, which might have been broadened and made genuinely fruitful, was used in a few cases and was then discarded in the interest of what seemed the more immediate requirements of the hour. To France, far more than to the Bourbons, it rendered an inestimable service, for it really performed a miracle. Her historic bounds were restored to her practically intact, and even after the return of Napoleon and the disaster at Waterloo she lost only Savoy, which was to be restored to her later under the influence of Cavour, and some comparatively unimportant frontier fortresses. The real criticism of the diplomats of Vienna is not that they clung too closely to the idea of legitimacy in their territorial settlements, but rather that they interpreted it too narrowly and that they departed from it too often either in the spirit of cowardice or of utter

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selfishness. For in reality the only important application of the idea was made in May at the peace of Paris, which guaranteed independence and favorable frontiers to France, rather than at the congress itself.

In the important settlement which the congress made of the question of Piedmont, the little state which was to be the cradle of Italian unity, it was perfectly evident that the idea of legitimacy was no longer dominant. The reactionary king, who had been living in Sardinia under the protection of English gunboats, was recalled and his territories were increased, not in the interests of any principle of justice, but so that there might be a real buffer state to stand between the French and the wide-spread Austrian lands in the Valley of the Po. Metternich feared with all his soul that some day a new Napoleon might arise and, invoking the memory of the dead hero, might again sweep across those rich and ill-gotten lands with new legions of another French republic or empire. He could little have foreseen that in less than half a century this same little state which he had placed in the gate of Italy, transformed and glorified by the self-sacrifice of one man, a king who kept his promises, and strengthened by the genius of another, the greatest diplomat and statesman of his day, with the aid of the nephew of the exiled Emperor, would, on the bloody battle-fields of Magenta and Solferino, bring to an end all the carefully balanced results of this great congress. Legitimacy required that Venice, conquered by the Corsican, should be restored; but that rich state, future home of Manin, was added to Austria. The ancient Republic of Genoa was given to Piedmont. As Metternich cynically said: "Republics are no longer in style."

The same fear of an aggressive France showed itself in two other arrangements of the congress. In the south,

Switzerland was strengthened by the addition of new cantons and was neutralized by the common agreement of the powers. It is perfectly evident to-day that although the neutrality of Switzerland has never been violated, she owes vastly more to the almost impregnable nature of her mountain fastnesses, especially under the conditions of modern war, and more still to the well-organized character of her militia, than she does to this idea of neutralization from which the Congress of Vienna expected so much. It is very difficult to see what rights neutralization has ever given to Switzerland, or to Belgium, or to Luxemburg which these states do not have both in morality and in law as simple members of the family of nations. Sovereignty was destroyed or lessened in certain very definite respects and nothing of value added in its place. The world will never be safe for a formally neutralized state until it is also safe for every independent and reasonably orderly state, however small or weak.

In a great many ways the union of Belgium and Holland under one monarch and one government was the most interesting territorial experiment originated at Vienna. How completely would the success of that one arrangement have changed the whole future history of Europe and even of the world! Our diplomats thought that they had created a rich, strong state, endowed with a glorious colonial empire, populated by a thrifty, courageous, and energetic people. One might imagine that when they created this new state they were not trying to place a protection in front of weak and defenceless Prussia against the aggression of fierce, warlike, aggressive France, the lustre of whose military prowess was scarcely dimmed even in this most glorious of all defeats; but rather that with prophetic eye they peered through the misty depths of one hundred crowded years to the time when this same Low Country, with all the agricultural wealth of Hol-

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land, known even then, and with the unguessed industrial possibilities of Belgium, safe in its own proud strength, safe by the solemn promises of the nations, safe with its dykes, safe because the aggressor must inevitably see its rich island empire pass into the hands of a rival, would stand like a bulwark against fiercer and more relentless aggression than even Napoleon ever dreamed. Certainly they saw at least this, that Belgium and Holland together might withstand the shock of any blow which might fall on them from either east or west, and that with their great ports they would forever be the natural commercial highway to the heart of Europe.

The fact that this experiment failed so dismally within fifteen years should not make us blind to the essential nobility of the plan. It is true that the people of Belgium and Holland were divided by very substantial differences of religion, of culture, and of language. I suppose that the so-called principle of nationality can be violated either by separating people who want to be together or by uniting those who desire to be separate. But the diplomats of Vienna did not lay much store by this new motto, which seemed to rise like an unholy exhalation from the smoke and bloodshed of the Revolution. And one must confess that, however valuable the idea of nationality may be as a general principle, it has not always been synonymous with liberty, and has sometimes been actually violated with enduring success. Other considerations, historical and practical, have determined the frontiers of nations and the composition of their citizenship. At least in the cases of the two republics of Switzerland and of the United States, one is strong in spite of very great differences in language, religion, and race, while the other is proud of the wonderful assimilative power of its institutions. One only needs to go back to the jeal-

ousies and rivalries which separated the thirteen colonies to see that an even greater experiment in union might easily have failed. If William of Orange, proud heir of a thrice distinguished name, had been more wise and tactful, if there had been enough political wisdom to devise a looser form of union in which the two peoples might have had the real strength of union without the galling shackles of complete amalgamation, even the great differences in history and in racial sympathy between the two peoples might well have been overcome to the lasting good of all. To-day we should certainly be living in a very different world.

In one other case the congress united dissimilar peoples, when it gave Norway to Sweden in return for Finland, which Bernadotte had yielded to Alexander as far back as 1812. This case was somewhat different from the union of Belgium and Holland, for each of the two had its own national history and traditions and the economic interests of the two peoples were certainly more distinct; but even with all these disadvantages, the union endured under a looser form than the one attempted for Belgium and Holland until our own day.

In arranging the Belgian line with the new Prussian territories on the Rhine, the chief idea was to secure a frontier as straight and easily defended as possible, a policy which was certainly carried out very successfully, as a glance at the map will show. This is significant as a test of the contention which was made in 1914 that Germany had to invade Belgium for fear of being invaded herself. Every foot of her western frontier north of Switzerland has been selected within a hundred years by Prussia herself, and with military considerations specifically in mind. After the Germans are driven out of Belgium and northern France by allied armies,

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there is some hint in this of the difficulty of the problem which still remains ahead if it is necessary to carry the campaign still farther.

Most of the arrangements which we have discussed were already formulated, at least roughly, at the time of the peace which was signed in Paris after Napoleon's abdication. The eight powers which signed this peace then agreed to meet in Vienna within two months to "complete the provisions of that treaty." It was not until the middle of September that representatives of the four great powers which had defeated Napoleon arrived at the capital of Austria. Gentz, the Austrian representative, has stated with remarkable frankness the spirit of that meeting, which contrasted so strangely with the high hopes which all liberals had entertained during the summer. His statement makes one somewhat pessimistic unless the liberal forces of the world are very much more watchful and powerful to-day than they were in 1814. "The grand phrases," he says, "such as 'the regeneration of the political system of Europe,' 'a lasting peace founded on the just division of strength,' were uttered to tranquillize the people, and to give an air of dignity and grandeur to this solemn assembly; but the real purpose was to divide among the conquerors the spoils taken from the vanquished."

The committee of the four great powers soon showed that they had no intention at all of allowing any one else to have any real part in the deliberations. They were planning to have everything cut and dried to announce to the rest when they arrived, quite after the fashion of a modern political convention. When Talleyrand left Paris he said, "I am probably going to play a very sorry part." When he reached Vienna he realized that it was no place at all for a modest man, and modesty was certainly not one of our ex-bishop's

besetting sins. In their first interview he said to Metternich, who was acting as the master of ceremonies, that he "was both able and knew how to sit." Metternich took the hint, and decided to ask the representatives of Spain and France to meet at his house on the evening of September 30, along with the four. Talleyrand managed to get a good seat near the head of the table, and Castlereagh, the very pompous English representative, turned to him and said: "The object of to-day's conference is to make you acquainted with what the four courts have done since we have been here." Then to Metternich: "You have the protocol of the allies." "Allies against whom?" said Talleyrand quietly. "Napoleon is on the island of Elba. If there are still allied powers, then I am an intruder here." "We used the word only for brevity." "Brevity, my lord, is valuable, but accuracy is still better." In a later conference of the self-appointed committee, Talleyrand was admitted to a full share in the deliberations. At this time he was posing as the champion of all the little powers, and especially of Saxony, in the name of the principle of legitimacy. Prussia was fully determined that Saxony should be hers as one of the spoils of war. Talleyrand made the seemingly innocent proposal that when the congress should meet it should be carried on according to the public law. Since all the powers had agreed that the idea of legitimacy was a part of that law, one can easily see the drift of this proposal. The Prussian, Hardenberg, who was very deaf, just managed to catch the expression. He leaped to his feet, pounding the table with his fist, and shouted: "No, sir; public law is a useless phrase. Why say that we shall act according to public law? . . . What has public law to do here?" "This," answered the former grand chamberlain of Napoleon: "that it sends you here," for without public law Prussia would have perished at Jena. So

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Talleyrand managed to set the committee by the ears over the partition of Saxony and the fate of Poland, and at the same moment gained for his own discredited country such a place that it practically became the arbiter of the deliberations, and the foreign minister of Louis XVIII gave his master an influence such as no French king had had since the days of the one who could say with truth: "L'état, c'est moi!"

It must be confessed that after the French representative gained for himself so prominent a place in the committee of the great powers, he showed little further zeal in the matter of assembling the actual congress, and the strangest thing about the Congress of Vienna is that in the strictest sense there never was any congress at all. Although more than a hundred kings, princes, and diplomats were present in the city, they never were asked to assemble in one room to deliberate. The leaders of the congress simply met together in more or less self-appointed committees, very often deliberated informally before dinner in the evening, or else intrigued secretly behind one another's backs. The nearest approach to an actual congress was a committee of eight powers, including the five great powers of the day and, in addition, Spain, Portugal, and Sweden, which met occasionally at Metternich's house and appointed other subcommittees to deal with special problems.¹ This committee had Metternich as chairman and Gentz as secretary. I suppose it is inevitable that in any great assembly which is to make arrangements of an intricate kind, the real work must be done by committees. But at Vienna there was no one to insist that the work of these small bodies should be finally reported to the main assembly. The arrangements which

¹ One important subcommittee organized the German Confederation. Another did the same for Switzerland.

were made in these devious and undemocratic ways were finally gathered together into what was called the final act of the Congress of Vienna and signed just a few days before the battle of Waterloo.

Outwardly the congress seemed an assembly of notables bent on pleasure alone. Vienna spent a sum equivalent to at least fifty thousand dollars a day on the entertainment of its guests. One who was there tells us: "The emperors dance, Metternich dances, Castlereagh dances. Only the Prince de Talleyrand does not dance," having a club-foot. "He plays whist." It seemed to the Prince de Ligne, as it must also have seemed to an eagerly waiting world, so soon to be disillusioned when it found back of the mask of fine phrases the same old selfishness and greed, that "the congress danced but did not advance." This same prince found himself about to die in the midst of the celebrations, and as he died he said: "I am preparing for the members of this congress a new amusement, the obsequies of a field marshal, a cavalier of the Golden Fleece."

Under all this appearance of gaiety there was enough of bitterness and of hatred. This was directed especially against Prussia and Russia, which had agreed, under the influence of Stein, that one was to receive Saxony and the other Poland. To these arrangements Austria was bitterly opposed, and Talleyrand made skilful use of the occasion to make himself leader of the opposition. England at first had her hands tied on account of the war against the United States. Her veteran soldiers had burned Washington in August and were soon to meet the sharpshooters of Andrew Jackson at New Orleans. On December 24 the peace of Ghent was signed with the United States, not so much, as Clay fondly believed, on account of his skill as a diplomat, but because there was every likelihood of even more stirring

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days in Europe. If Napoleon had landed from Elba in January instead of in March, he would have found his enemies divided in their councils and have had good chances of success. For on January 3, England, Austria, and France signed a secret treaty against the two great powers of the East.¹ But in the weeks which followed the differences were finally compromised and the famous arrangements were made by which Prussia received not only the fertile lands on the banks of the Rhine which had been occupied by France since 1794, but also Swedish Pomerania and the upper half of the kingdom of Saxony, which, in the language of the day, brought her population to ten million souls! Russia was satisfied with a large part of Poland, to which Alexander agreed to give a liberal constitution; and Austria gained the rich valley of the Po in northern Italy. England was content, for the kingdom of Hanover, which was under her king, was enlarged until it occupied all the southern coast of the North Sea not already held by other small powers, thus making the already dangerous Prussia a purely Baltic power. Peace left Great Britain the undisputed mistress of the seas.

Modern Germans have sometimes blamed the Congress of Vienna for not having given them Alsace and Lorraine, which is like blaming Adam for not having invented gunpowder. The bare idea had indeed been advocated, but until the congress had adjourned it does not seem to have entered any one's head as a serious political possibility that these provinces should belong to any one except France. Stein, the great Prussian statesman who acted as one of Alexander's chief advisers at the congress, was bitterly disappointed not to receive the whole of Saxony as he had

¹ Napoleon found a copy of this treaty on the table of the French king when he arrived in Paris and, characteristically, sent it to Alexander.

hoped, but he was well satisfied with the eastern frontier, as he well might be. For Prussia had acquired a population as numerous as at the time of her greatest extent, and one vastly more homogeneous. Not so much by the help of the weak Frederick William and of the deaf Hardenberg, but through Stein and Alexander of Russia, she had lost Poles and gained Germans. Her boundaries gave her the central position which made her the natural leader of the future German Empire, and which has proved of such inestimable military value in the present war. Her real grievance against the diplomats of Vienna lay in the north and centre, where Hanover, under the English king, lay like a great wedge cutting her territories in two and shutting her off effectually from the sea. It was not until almost half a century later that Prussia acquired a single important window which looked out toward the open Atlantic.

The return of Napoleon found all these arrangements virtually completed, and a great fear did that for unity which nine months of discussion had been unable to accomplish. As a result of the Hundred Days and the cowardice of his soldiers,¹ Murat was to lose his throne and life; France, too, was to give up a little of the very favorable frontier which the genius of Talleyrand had secured for her; but the final act of the congress was expected to usher in a new age of peace and good will, under wise kings and kindly landlords, after the Corsican should have ceased from troubling and the weary peoples be at rest, and the battle of Waterloo seemed to place the seal of a divine approval on its deeds.

¹ It was of these soldiers that their former king said: "You may dress them in blue, or you may dress them in green, or you may dress them in red, but any way you dress them they will run!"