

Peacemaking, Peacemakers and Diplomacy, 1880-1939

Peacemaking, Peacemakers and Diplomacy,
1880-1939:
Essays in Honour of Professor Alan Sharp

Edited by

Gaynor Johnson

**CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS**

P U B L I S H I N G

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INTRODUCTION

PROFESSOR ALAN SHARP, AN APPRECIATION

GAYNOR JOHNSON

If one of the measures of a successful career as an historian is the willingness of ones colleagues and friends to contribute to a festschrift to mark its *dénouement*, then the contribution made to the profession by Professor Alan Sharp has been very considerable. Indeed, it would have been possible to fill this volume several times over. It is also testimony to the high regard in which Alan is held that those scholars whose work appears within this volume are not only international authorities on their subjects but come from across Britain and North America, the heartlands of the study of what was still called diplomatic history when he trained as an historian. Assembling this book has also been a personal pleasure, not least because it was Alan's ideas about Lord Curzon, Lloyd George, the Foreign Office and the conduct of British foreign policy after the First World War that were among those who first fired my enthusiasm for international history when I was a postgraduate student. Since then, I have been one of the many who have been in receipt of his generous, good-humoured and constructive advice and his warm hospitality. Although not Irish by birth, Alan is an adopted son of The Province, having been based at the University of Ulster for more than thirty years, and retiring as Provost of its Coleraine campus. Something else that also spans three decades is his publishing career, from articles on Curzon and the Foreign Office written in the mid 1970s to his biography of Lloyd George published in 2008. His carefully measured output has always been readable, erudite and original as well as being of major academic significance. While never seeking to be unnecessarily provocative, nevertheless like all good historical writing, Alan's work has always led historical debates not simply followed them. Consequently, few would doubt that his work on the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, Lloyd George and Lord Curzon has been among the most significant of his generation.

Alan has been in the vanguard of those who have demonstrated the unique importance and dynamics of the international history of the 1920s, a decade whose significance has been so often underplayed by those more interested in the brinkmanship diplomacy of the 1930s. He has been quite happy to leave to others the task of explaining the actions of Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin and other similar figures who so many outside the world of the professional historian try to convince us we really ought to be more interested in. But his work has been none the less trailblazing for that. His articles on Lord Curzon's period as Foreign Secretary represented the first detailed commentary on the most controversial area of the life of this most complex of men in more than a generation. Likewise, Alan's book on the Paris Peace Conference and his biography of Lloyd George are also remarkable works of synthesis, each representing the only modern single-volume histories of their subjects. It is in a spirit of friendship and professional respect that this book is dedicated to him.

CHAPTER ONE

ORIGINS OF THE ANGLO-AMERICAN SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP, 1880-1914

ERIK GOLDSTEIN

During the nineteenth century Anglo-American relations underwent a remarkable transformation, one that would forge a relationship which would have a dramatic impact on the international relations of the twentieth century. Starting from a situation of wary mutual suspicion their relationship became one of amity, an amity particularly observable in the most influential sections of political society. This is a complex relationship, and different facets of it, have attracted various views. One analysis of the relationship has observed that "...it is difficult at times to distinguish the concept from the feelings aroused by other beliefs and interests, such as the Anglo-Saxon "race," the Anglican church, the common law, the peace movement, banking, trade, and high society – all of which bridged the Atlantic."¹ The focus here will be to consider how that nascent relationship made the transition from suspicion to amity in a way that it could later be built upon to create the basis for a close diplomatic partnership.

The historical literature has occasionally debated when the tipping point in relations occurred. Some take the year 1898, when during the Spanish-American war there was general British popular support for the United States. This was a development that did much to help change the climate of relations, and which saw a flurry of activity for finding more institutional ways of expressing friendly relations between the countries. Others, such as D.C. Watt, suggest 1896, with the Anglo-Venezuelan border dispute, when the British Empire began to attempt to find ways to minimize points of confrontation with the United States.² James Bryce at the time of his appointment as ambassador to Washington in 1907 observed that when he first visited the United States in 1870 there was still a good deal of bitter feeling towards Britain and that there were men living who recalled the War of 1812.³ His influential 1888 book, *The American*

Commonwealth, the first to provide a full explanation of American politics and society to a broad British readership, considered the turning point to be 1872 with the first Anglo-American arbitration which settled claims arising out of the American Civil War. Whichever year provided the turning point, those developments were built on earlier, wider, and more popular linkages.

One of the important points of origin of the English-speaking reconciliation was the common language, which not unnaturally generated a high degree of familiarity between the countries. Shakespeare is an obvious starting place, but it was not just the reading of Shakespeare. By the 1830s Shakespeare's birthplace and final resting place at Stratford-upon-Avon had become significant destinations for the ever burgeoning number of American visitors to England. Another writer with a trans-Atlantic following was the historian Thomas Carlyle. When there was a campaign to save for the public his house on Cheyne Row in London during 1894/95 Americans played a significant role, contributing twenty-five percent of the funds.⁴ The initial reports of the aspirations of the Carlyle memorial fund made it clear that "It is proposed to buy the house, and to keep it open for the benefit of visitors from both sides of the Atlantic."⁵ When the house was saved the American ambassador, Thomas Bayard, agreed to chair its management committee, as did his later successor Whitelaw Reid, while Joseph Choate, John Hay, and Walter Hines Page all served on the management committee during their time as ambassador.⁶

Interest in authors moved both ways. Ralph Waldo Emerson was one the Americans to be widely read in Britain. In 1847, on his lecture tour of Britain, Emerson said in a speech at the Athenæum, "That which lures a solitary American in the woods with the wish to see England is the moral peculiarity of the Saxon race, its commanding sense of right and wrong – the love and devotion to that, -- this is the Imperial trait which arms them with the sceptre of the globe."⁷ This was a sentiment often reiterated in one form or another over many decades by those advocating for closer Anglo-American ties. Not surprisingly years later Emerson's centenary attracted attention in Britain as well as his homeland.⁸

One long running policy area of Anglo-American common interest were the peace movements which emerged in both countries in the early to mid-nineteenth century. In 1843 the first Universal Peace Congress met in London, organized by the American and British Peace Societies.⁹ Organizations to promote peace flourished by the turn of the twentieth century, for example the World Peace Foundation headquartered in Boston and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace located in Washington.

One aspect of this movement was the promotion of disarmament or some degree of arms reduction or limitation.¹⁰ Discussions on how to assure future peace turned to what mechanisms could assist in conflict resolution. During the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth centuries there was a vogue for bi-lateral arbitration treaties. Probably the most substantive accomplishment of the first Hague Peace Conference in 1899 was the creation of the Permanent Court of Arbitration, headquartered at the Hague in the magnificent Peace Palace, paid for by the British-American industrialist and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, who had business interests in both countries. The significant popular support for arbitration treaties in both Britain and the United States undoubtedly made them instruments of interest to political leaders. In Britain memorials supporting an Anglo-American arbitration treaty were signed by significant members of the House of Commons in 1887 and 1894. Talks began in general terms about such a treaty in 1895 between United States Secretary of State, Walter Gresham, and the British ambassador at Washington, Sir Julian Paunceforte. These talks lapsed, however, with Gresham's death and the almost simultaneous Venezuelan crisis.

The potential dangers to relations posed by the latter crisis caused renewed interest in arbitration. In Britain W.T. Stead, the founder-editor of the *Review of Reviews*, an advocate for the union of the English-speaking peoples, was one of the leading advocates for an Anglo-American arbitration treaty, and the author of a pamphlet entitled *Always Arbitrate Before You Fight*. On 11 January 1897 an arbitration treaty was signed by the new Secretary of State, Richard Olney and Paunceforte. It was a very tepid agreement, but it was potentially a first step. The treaty's ratification was taken up by the incoming administration of President McKinley, which might have suggested cross-party support. Opposition though was also cross-party. On 5 May 1898 the Olney-Paunceforte treaty was defeated in the Senate.¹¹ Though there was undoubtedly a degree of anglophobia in the decision the political landscape was beginning to shift dramatically. Only four days earlier on 1 March the Americans had gained victory at the Battle of Manila Bay, and the pro-American sentiments demonstrated in Britain and the Empire helped to further shift American attitudes. Olney, in the wake of the defeat of the treaty wrote to Henry White, then an American diplomat stationed in London, that he believed the America people, "...feel themselves to be not merely in name but in fact, part of one great English-speaking family whose proud destiny it is to lead and control the world."¹²

In building Anglo-American cooperation a number of efforts helped generate the necessary public support.¹³ The collaborative saving of a

shared common heritage was one these steps. Earlier efforts such as those over the Carlyle house provided some of the impetus for the founding of the National Trust in 1895. It has been observed of the founders of the National Trust that, "...one of the primary aims was to help cement a union of English-speaking people that rested on sentiment, rather than upon material interest, on common social, political and religious traditions, on historical memories and on English literature."¹⁴ This new organization would institutionalize this interest in preserving a common cultural heritage. One of the earliest aspirations of the trust was to organize an American branch. In developing the idea for a National Trust its founders had worked closely with a similar Massachusetts group, the Trustees of (Public) Reservations, and when the National Trust was founded a representative of the Trustees was made an *ex officio* member of the council, one of earliest examples of Anglo-American transatlantic institutionalized representation.

The joint fascination for the built environment, as a basis for building an Anglo-American relationship, had multiple manifestations. In 1907 Isabel Inez de Guzman Garrison, one of the American-based founders of the Atlantic Union, who saw in the legend of King Arthur a heroic common past, attempted to rescue Glastonbury Abbey. In 1909 came the opening of Harvard House at Stratford-on-Avon. This was reputedly the ancestral home of John Harvard, the eponymous benefactor of the university that bears his name. The attribution may or may not be accurate but it was enough for Mary Corelli, a popular novelist of the time and one of the motivating forces in the shaping of Shakespeare's Stratford, to convince an American businessman, Edward Morris of Chicago, to purchase and donate it to Harvard University.¹⁵ It was thought it might provide a base for American, or at least Harvard, visitors to the home town of the Bard. The house was opened by Ambassador Whitelaw Reid who was conveyed to the town by a special train "...decorated with English and American flags, and bore a laurel wreath across it."¹⁶ Ambassador Reid observed in his remarks, in a now familiar paean of the Anglo-American cause, that occasions such as this would support the hope that, "Long might the two peoples continue to give to the world the oldest, the longest, the largest, and the most perfect example of ordered liberty that history recorded!"¹⁷ With these remarks Reid moved from the commemoration of the benefactor of American higher education, through his ancestral geographical link with the great English playwright, to one of political co-purpose.

Some Anglo-American initiatives also involved the creation of new visual representations of a common heritage. One was the erection at

Gainsborough, Lincolnshire, of the John Robinson Memorial church through money raised in the United States. The church was named for one of the early Pilgrim leaders and its cornerstone was laid by ambassador Bayard in 1896. This feeling of a common religious heritage was expressed again by ambassador Choate in 1904, at the centenary meeting of the British and Foreign Bible Society, when he asked the rhetorical question, "Why should not England and the United States co-operate in good works, when they share one God, one Bible, one language, and one destiny?"¹⁸

This Anglo-American shared heritage was part of the intellectual ferment over the future of foreign policy that began to involve the future of Anglo-American diplomatic relations. Richard Olney, who had only recently stepped down as United States Secretary of State, while speaking at Harvard University in February 1898, observed that, "There is no doubt with what nations we should co-operate. England, our most formidable rival, is our most natural friend. There is such a thing as patriotism for race as well as for country....Though sometimes we may have such quarrels as only relations and intimate neighbours indulge in, yet it may be said that the near future will see in our closer friendship a power for good that will be felt by all mankind."¹⁹ Joseph Chamberlain, the Colonial Secretary, in an important speech in May 1898 declared, "And I even go so far as to say that, terrible as war may be, even war itself would be cheaply purchased if in a greater and noble cause the Stars and Stripes and the Union Jack should wave together over an Anglo-Saxon Alliance."²⁰ This led the *Quarterly Review* to observe that, "There can be no question of the general accuracy of these words. Different as are the habits of the Union from those of Great Britain, diverse as is their population, the intellectual standards, the moral aspirations, of the two nations are already the same; their dispositions and policy must approximate as years go on, and in any serious world-struggle we should be certain to have each other's sympathy and probably co-operation." The review concluded by stating that Chamberlain's speech "...marks a turning point in history."²¹ In August 1898 Sir George Clarke, a significant commentator on defence matters, commented, "Fourteen years ago I pointed out in an official memorandum that "perhaps the most marked feature of international politics is the growing *rapprochement* between England and the United States – a growth not based merely on race sentiment, but on community of interests." And I can say with truth that to promote and Anglo-American understanding has been one of the greatest objects of my life."²²

How to develop the relationship at a diplomatic level was problematic. Both countries had a long tradition of wariness of peacetime alliances.

The mood in Britain though was beginning to shift, with growing awareness of the isolation of the British Empire, as well as its serious strategic over-stretch, both of which became even more obvious during the course of the Boer War. For Americans, however, the Monroe Doctrine had equally clearly emerged as the great touchstone of foreign policy. It was therefore of importance for Britain and the supporters of closer Anglo-American relations to address this. In November 1902 the House of Commons declared its support of the doctrine in its entirety.²³ This was reiterated not long after in a speech by Lord Charles Beresford, a leading naval officer, and at the time a member of parliament, before the Pilgrims' Society of New York. The tenor generally taken by British speakers was that no formal alliance was needed, merely closer cooperation. This was in general the approach taken by the Anglo-Americans advocates on both sides of the Atlantic in the slow construction of vehicles for communication and interaction and building of institutional ties.

As Anglo-American amity warmed there seemed to be an ever increasing number of opportunities to celebrate common histories, language, institutions, and values. In 1901 came the Millenary anniversary of Alfred the Great, with the focus of the celebrations being at Winchester. The centre piece was the unveiling of a statue of Alfred at Winchester by Hamo Thornycroft together with a service of remembrance at Winchester cathedral.²⁴ A significant portion of the funds for the statue were raised in the United States through the assistance of ambassador Choate, who was a member of the celebration's Executive Committee, as well as by Professor Bright of the Johns Hopkins University who was secretary of the American Alfred Millenary Committee. Attending the commemoration were representatives "...from the Universities and learned societies of the United Kingdom, its colonies and the United States of America."²⁵ Unfortunately the celebrations coincided with the assassination of President McKinley, and many of the participants travelled from the memorial service for the late president at Westminster Abbey to the celebrations at Winchester, where the flags were at half-mast. The American ambassador had been meant to be part of the events of the commemoration, but the assassination of the president made that impossible, though his place was taken by Charles Francis Adams. He took the opportunity to mark Americans' appreciation for the "deep, spontaneous, all-pervasive, sincere sympathy manifested by Great Britain at the time of America's National bereavement."²⁶ It also provided a moment for the expression of mutual friendship in the wake of a tragic event. There was also a sense of parallel loss, with Queen Victoria having died in January 1901 and then President McKinley in September.

Those deaths saw two new heads of state being recognized in the same year, and much would be made in the succeeding period of the duality of King Edward VII and President Roosevelt, which even decades later continues to attract attention, most recently in David Fromkin's *The King and the Cowboy: Theodore Roosevelt and Edward VII, Secret Partners*.²⁷ The imagery of their working together is all the more fascinating as in reality the two never met. But they both signified the beginning of what was hoped to be a new dynamic era, and they were both indeed inclined to closer amity. Edward was always careful to play his constitutional role, but he had clear views on foreign policy which he often tried quietly to move forward. During a visit of American naval officers to Britain in 1903, they were received by the king, and while careful with his words they were reported in the United States, "...as an emphatic declaration in favour of closer relations..." and that it was "...it was clear from his remarks that he desired the two nations move together in the interests of the peace of the world."²⁸ Ambassador Whitelaw Reid, at a Pilgrims' dinner send off to Bryce in 1907, observed that as ambassador Bryce's primary task was to safeguard the interests of his own country and that the best interests of both countries lay in promoting peace. After referring to President Roosevelt and Edward the VII as unsurpassed peacemakers, Reid went on to comment that, "There never was there a time when the two peoples were so glad to be friends, or when they looked with such impatience on the idea of permitting anything to prevent it."²⁹

Efforts to give more institutional form to the non-official activities promoting closer Anglo-American amity and cooperation moved in a series of fits and starts. The outpouring of popular support for the United States in Britain, unlike on the continent, at the time of the Spanish-American War of 1898 provided a useful opportunity. An Anglo-American League was formed in London as it was, "...strongly felt that the present is an opportune moment for doing something to strengthen the bonds of friendship between the English-speaking peoples of the World..."³⁰ The "... primary object of the organization was to give expression to feelings of cordiality and essential unity between the peoples of Great Britain and America..." The first resolution passed at the inaugural meeting, moved by the naval expert Lord Brassey and seconded by Thomas Ismay, chairman of the White Star Line, was that "Considering that the peoples of the British Empire and of the United States are closely allied by blood, inherit the same literature and laws, hold the same principles of government, recognize the same ideals of freedom and humanity in the guidance of their national policy, and are drawn together by strong common interests in many parts of the world this meeting is of

the opinion that every effort should be made in the interests of civilization and peace to secure the most cordial and constant co-operation on the part of the two nations."³¹ Those attending the inaugural meeting were from a wide cross section of the major figures of the British political establishment, and was held at Stafford House in London under the presidency of the Duke of Sutherland.

When, a few week after the founding of the league, the United States ambassador, John Hay, was recalled to Washington to assume the office of Secretary of State, he was presented with an address by a committee of the league, headed by Bryce. This address observed that, "...the war, now happily ended, gave occasion for the expression of the feelings of affection and sympathy toward the United States which the British people have long entertained."³² Hay in his reply observed that, "On both sides of the ocean the conviction is almost universal that a clear, cordial and friendly understanding between Great Britain and the United States is a necessity for civilization." It has been observed that Hay's interest in strong Anglo-American bonds was unsympathetic but rather pragmatic.³³ Hay, who served as President Lincoln's private secretary during the American Civil War, at that time had been suspicious of Britain, viewing its governing class as pro-Confederate.³⁴ His view of the possibilities of working with Britain changed over the ensuing decades, and it was during his tenure of the London embassy, 1897-1898, that he was able to both witness and nurture the embryonic relationship. On his return to Washington as Secretary of State he followed a policy of trying to work with Britain, and his biographer devotes one chapter to the subject of "Hay as Anglophile".³⁵

In parallel with the plan for an Anglo-American League there was also the spontaneous idea of an Anglo-American dinner, and this group was presided over by the Duke of Fife, giving it a semi-royal imprimatur.³⁶ Among those participating were Conan Doyle and Rudyard Kipling. The plans for the dinner and the league seem to have arisen separately but overlapped and were part of the general impetus to find some way to crystallize this new transatlantic good feeling.

The response in Britain and the Dominions to the Spanish-American war did not go unnoticed in the United States. *The Century Magazine* commented on "...the spontaneous and widely extended demonstrations of regard for America throughout Great Britain and her sister states have revealed a fellowship which it is not too much to say marks an era in the history of humanity."³⁷ The new sense of Anglo-Saxonism in the wake of the war can be seen in the small blizzard of efforts at institutionalization of Anglo-American amity. In 1899 Cecil Rhodes amended the provisions of

his will relating to the envisaged scheme of Rhodes Scholars at Oxford to include Americans, and this came into effect with his death in 1902.

In 1901 Sir Walter Besant, a significant literary figure, established the Atlantic Union with the object of enabling "...visitors from America and the colonies to meet and become acquainted with English residents."³⁸ He had visited the United States in 1893 at the time of the Columbian Exposition and was struck "...with the dream of a great solid confederacy between all the English-speaking races."³⁹ He was much distressed by the tension caused by the Venezuela dispute.⁴⁰ He was also an ardent advocate of arbitration between the English-speaking peoples, arguing the "...we must make war impossible."⁴¹ His idea was to "...to bring about a better understanding and attachment between people of the mother-country and those of the colonies and America, not through politics or printed propaganda, but through social and intellectual intercourse."⁴² Besant was well known as "...a great lover of clubs and societies"⁴³ Because of his literary activities and his connections with many writers he was able to involve many well known authors in the cause of Anglo-American amity. The Atlantic Union survived his death in 1901 and later merged with the newly founded English-Speaking Union after the First World War.

One organization established at this time which has endured is the Pilgrims' Society. It was formed in 1902 as a by-product of the celebrations surrounding the coronation of Edward VII. The Pilgrims were organized with branches on both sides of the Atlantic and unlike the Anglo-American League, which had been a subscription organization with an open door, the Pilgrims were an exclusive invitation only body. Much of the success of the Pilgrims was due to its energetic organizer (Sir) Harry Brittain, whose ideas provided the initial inspiration for the society and in which he would play a prominent role into the 1960s. He was selected to serve as the first Honorary Secretary, and he put great effort into attracting to the society the most influential figures possible. He would serve as its chairman during the period 1913-1919.

Among those supporting the new organization and who were present in London during the coronation period, during which the organizational meetings were held, were such significant American business figures as John D. Rockefeller (Jr), M.J. de Yong of San Francisco, and Charles Yerkes. Another strong supporter was General "Joe" Wheeler, a Confederate hero of the Civil War and of the recent Spanish-American War, who helped recruit Lord Roberts as the first president of the British society. As Wheeler explained it at the time one of the key purposes of the society to facilitate introduction of visitors to one another's country so that they could easily meet other men of influence.

At their first annual dinner, held at Prince's Restaurant on Piccadilly, London, in June 1903 Senator Chauncey Depew explained that the society had been founded "to promote friendly relations by pilgrimages."⁴⁴ The society attracted numerous influential figures, in part through the assiduous work put into shaping an influential roster of members. These included not only important political figures, but people from the literary world who enjoyed popularity on both sides of the Atlantic. Attending the first dinner were Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Anthony Hope Hawkins. At one of the early dinners of the Pilgrims' Society in New York in February 1903 over 200 guests attended. That evening event ended with the guests joining hands and singing *Auld Lang Syne*.⁴⁵

Lord Grey, while Governor-General of Canada, speaking at a Pilgrims' dinner in New York in April 1906 stated, "It is the proud mission of the Anglo-Saxon race to maintain in advance the cause of civilization throughout the world." He concluded his remarks with the declaration that, "To those of us who believe that in the coming solidarity and unification of the Anglo-Saxon race lie the future peace and hope of the world, the signs of the times are most encouraging. The forces of the world are slowly but steadily drifting in this direction. The peoples of the United Kingdom, of the self-governing nations of the British Empire and of the United States are joint trustees for the protection and expansion of that Anglo-Saxon civilization."⁴⁶

The impact of the decades of slowly warming relations at the non-state level could be seen to be slowly trickling into the diplomatic side of the relationship. Upon the death of the American ambassador, Whitelaw Reid, in 1912 J. Arthur Bryant, a member of the executive committee of the Pilgrims, wrote an appreciation of his life for *The Times*, referring to Reid as a notable "Pilgrim". He went on to observe "A long line of Ambassadors has succeeded for now a century maintaining relations of mutual respect and esteem."⁴⁷ As has been seen many of the ambassadors were active at the sub-diplomatic level to help build goodwill among the general population.

As noted in Reid's obituary the two countries were approaching almost a hundred years of good relations. The decades of building Anglo-American amity through all these numerous social and commemorative efforts reached its culmination with plans to celebrate the centenary of peace between the two countries in 1914, which would mark the anniversary of the Treaty of Ghent. A "British Committee for the Celebration of the One Hundredth Anniversary of Peace Among English Speaking Peoples" headed by the Duke of Teck, again giving a trans-Atlantic organization a quasi-royal seal of approval.⁴⁸ The organizing

committee included the ubiquitous Harry Brittain. There were also American and Canadian committees. This effort brought together many of the sub-diplomatic strands that had emerged in the previous years. Celebrating the century of peace would be an example to the world for the peace movement. At a preliminary meeting to discuss the arrangements it was decided to create new, visual reminders of the relationship with a statue of Queen Victoria to be erected in Washington, while one of George Washington should be erected in London. The latter was particularly remarkable as it was intended that the one time commander of a rebel army be placed in Trafalgar Square, which perhaps can be described as the Pantheon of the British Empire. The presentation of the Washington statue was delayed by the war, while the statue of Queen Victoria never occurred. As discussions continued a statue of Lincoln was added to the London plans.⁴⁹

To provide a different visual example of the friendship of the two countries it was planned to save the Washington ancestral home at Sulgrave in Northamptonshire, just as Shakespeare's birthplace, Carlyle's birthplace, and Harvard House were saved through trans-Atlantic efforts. On the educational side it was planned to create a Sulgrave Institution which would provide an educational dimension. The plans were also filled with proposals for much pageantry and historical recreations through the United States and the empire. All these plans had to be largely abandoned or postponed with the outbreak of the Great War.

In his book *The Great Rapprochement: England and the United States, 1895-1914* Bradford Perkins has one chapter dedicated to "The Substructure of Diplomacy", which consider the weaving of that complex web of trans-Atlantic ties.⁵⁰ The transformation of a relationship once fraught with suspicion, enmity, and the memory of armed conflict was transformed in just over a century to one of military alliance come 1917. There is some irony in the fact that much of the growing friendship between the two countries at the sub-diplomatic level had pivoted on the concept of peaceful relations as an example to the wider international community of successful national development, and that while 1914 was intended to celebrate the triumph of peace, the next stage of the relationship would be forged in war. Some, such as Joseph Chamberlain, had seen in the growing ties between the two countries the possibility of a diplomatic alliance that would benefit and help assure the security of both. It would indeed be the greatest diplomatic and military alliance of the twentieth century, but its roots lay in the sub-strata of the deeper ties between the two countries, some occurring naturally and the some being

careful nurtured to bring about what came to be call simply “the special-relationship.”

Notes

The author would like to thank Professor Melanie Hall of Boston University for information relating to the Carlyle House.

¹ F. Herrick, ‘Gladstone and the Concept of the “English-Speaking Peoples”’ *Journal of British Studies* 12:1 (Nov. 1972), pp. 150-56.

² D.C. Watt, ‘America and the British Foreign-Policy-Making Elite, from Joseph Chamberlain to Anthony Eden’ *Review of Politics* 25:1 (Jan. 1963), pp. 3-33.

³ ‘Mr. Bryce on America: Pilgrims’ Farewell Dinner’ *Manchester Guardian* 7 Feb. 1907, p. 7.

⁴ M. Hall, ‘The Politics of Collecting: the Early Aspirations of the National Trust, 1883-1913’ *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, sixth series, Vol. 13 (2003), pp. 345-57.

⁵ ‘Carlyle’s House’ *The Times*, 31 Dec. 1894, p. 6, col. b.

⁶ Illustrated Memorial Volume of the Carlyle House Purchase Fund Committee with Catalogue of Carlyle’s Books, Manuscripts, Pictures and Furniture Exhibited Therein (London, Carlyle House Carlyle’s House Memorial Trust, c. 1895, facsimile Saltire Society, 1995), pp. 16-20, 149.

⁷ ‘The Emerson Centenary’ *Manchester Guardian*, 25 May 1903, p. 10.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ F.H. Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace: theory and practice in the history of Relations Between States* (Cambridge, 1963), pp. 95-96.

¹⁰ E. Goldstein, ‘Disarmament, Arms Control, and Arms Reduction’ in M. Hennessey and B.J.C. McKercher, (eds), *War in the Twentieth Century: Reflections at Century’s End* (Westport, 2003), pp. 45-64.

¹¹ N.M. Blake, ‘The Olney-Paunceforte Treaty of 1897’ *American Historical Review* 50 (1945) pp. 228-43.

¹² Perkins p. 29, letter of from Olney to White, 8 May 1897.

¹³ For a discussion of the wider context see D. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, MA, 1998).

¹⁴ M. Hall, ‘The Politics of Collecting: the Early Aspirations of the National Trust, 1883-1913’ *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* sixth series, vol. 13 (2003), pp. 345-57.

¹⁵ ‘Harvard House, Stratford-on-Avon’, *The Times*, 30 Sep. 1909, p. 11, col. b.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 7 Oct. 1909, p. 11, col. e.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ ‘The Bible Society Centenary’ *Manchester Guardian* 9 Mar. 1904, p. 6.

¹⁹ Olney speech of 2 Feb. 1898, quoted in, Sir G. Sydenham Clarke, ‘England and America’ *Quarterly Review* vol 44. no. 258 (Aug. 1898), pp. 186-195.

²⁰ *The Times*, 14 May 1898.

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- ²² Clarke, 'England and America', p. 188.
- ²³ 'Beresford upholds Monroe Doctrine' *New York Times*, 5 Feb. 1903, p. 1.
- ²⁴ B. Yorke, *The King Alfred Millenary in Winchester, 1901* (Hampshire Papers 17) (Winchester, 1999).
- ²⁵ 'The King Alfred Millenary' *Manchester Guardian*, 20 Sep. 1901, p. 5.
- ²⁶ 'Statue of King Alfred Unveiled' *New York Times* 21 Sep. 1901, p. 3.
- ²⁷ D. Fromkin *The King and the Cowboy: Theodore Roosevelt and Edward VII, Secret Partners* (New York, 2008).
- ²⁸ 'King Honors Americans' *San Francisco Chronicle* 10 Jul. 1903, p. 5.
- ²⁹ 'Mr. Bryce on America: Pilgrims' Farewell Dinner' *Manchester Guardian* 7 Feb. 1907, p. 7.
- ³⁰ Roberts (6, King's Bench Walk, Temple) to Davidson (Bishop of Winchester), 28 May 1898. Davidson 51, ff.50-51. Archbishop Davidson Papers, Lambeth Palace Library, London.
- ³¹ 'An Anglo-American League' *New York Times*, 14 Jul. 1898, p. 1.
- ³² 'The Anglo-American Ties' *New York Times*, 9 Sep. 1898, p. 7.
- ³³ K. Clymer, *John Hay: The Gentleman as Diplomat* (Ann Arbor, 1975), p. 112.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.* p. 68.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 157-71.
- ³⁶ The Duke of Fife was married to the eldest daughter of the future Edward VII.
- ³⁷ 'Topics of the Time' *The Century Magazine* 56:5 (Sep. 1898), p. 795.
- ³⁸ 'Object of Atlantic Union' *New York Times*, 5 Jun. 1900, p. 6. F.W. Boege, 'Sir Walter Besant: Novelist. Part One', *Nineteenth Century Fiction* <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublication?journalCode=ninecentfict> 10:4 (Mar. 1956), pp. 249-80.
- ³⁹ 'Sir Walter Besant's Proposed Anglo-American Institute' *Harper's Weekly* 40, no. 2042 (8 Feb. 1896), p. 135.
- ⁴⁰ 'Sir Walter Besant Dead' *New York Times*, 11 Jun. 1901, p. 9. See also F. Boege, 'Sir Walter Besant Novelist' *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 10:4 (Mar., 1956), pp. 249-280.
- ⁴¹ 'Sir Walter Besant, 'The Future of the Anglo-Saxon Race' *North American Review* 477 (Aug. 1896), pp. 129-43.
- ⁴² W. H. Rideing. *Many Celebrities and a Few Others: a Bundle of Reminiscences* (Garden City, 1912), pp. 247-8.
- ⁴³ F. Hardy, *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy, 1840-1891* (New York, 1928), p. 173.
- ⁴⁴ 'Mr. George Wyndham, M.P., on Anglo-American Relations' *Manchester Guardian* 20 Jun. 1903, p.10.
- ⁴⁵ 'Beresford Upholds Monroe Doctrine' *New York Times*, 5 Feb. 1903, p.1.
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- ⁴⁷ 'Mr. Whitelaw Reid' *The Times*, 16 Dec. 1912, p. 9, col. c.

⁴⁸ The Duke of Teck was brother of Queen Mary. On the committee see for example The National Archives, Kew, UK (TNA)/FO115/1813.

⁴⁹ 'Statue of Victoria for London' *New York Times*, 24 May 1913, p. 13.

⁵⁰ B. Perkins, *The Great Rapprochement: England and the United States, 1895-1914* (London, 1969), pp. 119-55.

CHAPTER TWO

BETWEEN OLD DIPLOMACY AND NEW: EYRE CROWE AND BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY, 1914-1925

T.G. OTTE

"Ambitions et défaillances, c'est de l'humanité de tous le temps."

—Georges Clemenceau.¹

To associate Sir Eyre Crowe with the precepts of the "New Diplomacy" seems problematic. After all, Crowe's political outlook was formed well before the 1914-18 watershed in world events. Crowe was never an evangelist of "New Diplomacy". In so far as there was a close association with "New Diplomacy", it was a biographical accident. Crowe's career straddled the war years and the protracted period of peace-making; and as Permanent Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office from November 1920 onwards he was confronted with the problems of bedding down the new world order. And yet, to depict Crowe as an unreconstructed "old diplomatist" out of his time would be equally misplaced.

Crowe's attitude towards the advent of "New Diplomacy" was complex. To understand it, it is necessary to consider also his role in Britain's war-time diplomacy, for here Crowe emerged as an innovative practitioner of foreign policy, combining elements of economic warfare with diplomatic and military tools.

Crowe's career before 1914 was steady rather than spectacular. He was, after all, a Foreign Office grub, never a diplomatic butterfly. His progress,

however, was ineluctable. Indeed, in some respects, his career before the Great War was more significant than after it.

Crowe joined the Foreign Office in 1885, and after many years as a junior and then resident clerk he quietly established for himself a position of growing significance within the Foreign Office. A senior clerk since 1907, Crowe was promoted to become one of the department's three Assistant Under-Secretaries in 1912.² Although he was never without powerful enemies, internal intrigues by Hardinge, now Viceroy of India, failed to sabotage his further progress. By the summer of 1914, Crowe was in line to succeed the then Permanent Under-Secretary, Sir Arthur Nicolson.³

It is one of the ironies in the history of modern British diplomacy that Crowe was destined to become the permanent head of the Foreign Office in the autumn of 1914. At the age of fifty, he was at the height of his physical and intellectual powers, with a further fifteen years in the office ahead of him. The outbreak of the Great War made this impossible. When he eventually did reach the top of his chosen profession six years later, he was no longer a well man. And this affected his performance as much as the by now fundamentally altered domestic and external environment in which he had to operate.

With the outbreak of the war began Crowe's internal exile in Whitehall. During the early days of the conflict he threw himself into readying the Office for war work. Unlike Crowe, Grey seemed exhausted, barely able to focus on the momentous tasks ahead: "I have the greatest difficulty in getting some energy into Grey. We ought to be much more active."⁴ Grey ignored Crowe's forceful representations, and ignored Portugal's offer to join the war against Germany. Similarly, his advice to respond positively to the Greek alliance offer fell on deaf ears.⁵ Crowe also pressed the government to address the issue of blockading Germany, as one of the "larger questions of policy". The neutral countries of north western Europe were vital to "bring[ing] into a system of fighting alliances a ring of Powers surrounding the enemies." This required financial assistance and guaranteed supplies.⁶ At the same time, Crowe pushed through the immediate reorganization of departmental arrangements to ensure "the proper despatch of business." The Eastern and Western Departments were abolished in due course, and replaced with the War Department, now the sole channel for all war-related matters: "I am much relieved of work and things move more rapidly in the office."⁷ This reorganisation was nevertheless something of a Pyrrhic victory for Crowe, in the short term at any rate. Relations with Grey and Nicolson were

stretched to breaking point under the strains of war. In September, the Foreign Secretary decided to postpone the planned personnel changes, which had entailed sending Nicolson to the sunnier uplands of the Paris embassy to be succeeded by Crowe in Whitehall. This was now put on hold for the duration of the war. Further changes were afoot that affected Crowe's position at the Foreign Office. In mid-September, Grey decided to divide departmental work between Nicolson and his designated successor as PUS. The former now took sole charge of the War Department's political business, leaving Crowe to deal with the economic aspects of wartime diplomacy. This led to an explosive row with Nicolson and the Foreign Secretary.⁸

For the next year, Crowe's standing in the Office was somewhat diminished. Grey's renewed reorganisation meant that Crowe was now "no longer informed of what goes on in the War Department."⁹ Though undoubtedly irksome for the PUS-designate, there was nevertheless method in the division of responsibilities between Nicolson and Crowe. Under war-time conditions, the bureaucratic neo-absolutism, established by Hardinge before 1910, with the entire information flow and control over policy decisions concentrated in the hands of the PUS, proved "an egregious failure. No one man can properly do the work which Hardinge's system entailed."¹⁰ Nicolson, moreover, was worn out after four years at the head of the Foreign Office, and had somewhat antiquated views on economic warfare. By contrast, Crowe had gathered considerable experience in blockade and contraband matters at The Hague and London conferences before the war.

Excluded now from the "high politics" of foreign affairs, Crowe turned the field of economic warfare into his departmental bailiwick. In September 1914, the blockade of the Central Powers was more an aspiration than a coherent strategy. Confusion as to its objectives, means, and organization was all-pervasive. Crowe soon established his complete ascendancy over this aspect of Britain's war effort. A number of factors aided him in this. His own expertise of neutral shipping and belligerent rights was one factor, the other being the Cabinet's decision to transfer the superintendence of the inter-departmental contraband committee from the Admiralty to the Foreign Office. In November 1914, Crowe outlined a new blockade policy, based on separate contraband agreements to be negotiated with the European neutrals. To some extent his proposals were the logical extension of an earlier Cabinet decision to seek an agreement with the Netherlands to prohibit the onward export of imported foodstuffs eastwards across the porous border with Germany. It also reflected the

informal talks at The Hague about the creation of a private body with quasi-governmental functions to supervise the import of designated contraband goods into Holland, and guarantee their home consumption.¹¹ As a result of these developments, Crowe's role grew in significance. All war-related business of the Foreign Office's Commercial and Treaty Departments was subsumed under the new Contraband Department, superintended by him. This "was the humble beginning of the vast Contraband Department which grew into the Ministry of Blockade."¹² The new ministry was created in February 1916 to conduct all blockade-related government business. It had its own minister with a seat in the Cabinet in Lord Robert Cecil; and Crowe himself was its Permanent Under-Secretary in all but name.¹³

As the conflict on the continent settled down to a dogged military stalemate, so the remit of the blockade department expanded. Crowe nevertheless opposed any kind of blanket continental blockade. No doubt, from the autumn of 1916, he was prepared to apply greater pressure on the smaller neutrals.¹⁴ Yet he sought to use the blockade instrument more intelligently. Politically, any decision to pursue unrestricted economic warfare increased the risk of some of the Northern neutrals joining the Central Powers. Instead Crowe advocated "concentrating all our attention of a small number of articles of which we could effectively cut off the supply and the want of whom would make it practically impossible for the enemy to continue its warlike operations."¹⁵ Under his superintendence the blockade department evolved into one of the central war departments in Whitehall. As Owen O'Malley later reflected, the effectiveness of the blockade weapon "owed as much to the fertility of Crowe's brain as it did to the Tenth Cruiser Squadron."¹⁶

Crowe's blockade work was significant for his future career on two counts. In terms of his policy outlook, the constant friction with the United States over neutral shipping and belligerent rights to search neutral vessels prior to 1917 hardened his anti-American inclinations. As the war entered its final year, he privately observed that the "Americans [were] unsatisfactory so far on account of confusion & delay. They also make promises (like a keen shopman) which they cannot keep. [...] The great thing now [in January 1918] is to get them into France. If anything critical should happen in France before American troops are involved, they might easily find excuses to get out of the business."¹⁷ This experience was to shape Crowe's attitude towards the United States for the remainder of his career.

Crowe's blockade work was significant also for his own future

promotion. There was a profound irony in this. Moving Crowe out of the War Department to take charge of economic warfare was meant to exile him. But it had the unintended consequence of enabling him once more to demonstrate his organisational skills and strategic intelligence. Although technically separate, the Ministry of Blockade was located within the Foreign Office building. Its officials were, for the most part, Foreign Office clerks, so that there was a continuity in personnel. Indeed, a stint at the blockade department formed an important part of the career trajectory of many senior interwar diplomats, men like Sir Alexander Cadogan, Sir Orme Sargent or Sir Robert Vansittart.

Being shunted to the Contraband Department was no doubt something of a humiliation for Crowe in September 1914. Yet, his internal exile was more apparent than real. Relations with Grey were restored by the middle of 1915, though Crowe had little confidence in Grey's soundness or steadfastness under pressure. He "dare[d] not leave Grey alone with them [French delegates]" to discuss blockade matters, as he once confided to his wife.¹⁸ Crowe had also now powerful allies in the new coalition government, more especially Cecil and his Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Commander Frederick Leverton-Harris. Furthermore, Grey's former private secretary, Sir William Tyrrell, from whom he had become estranged in 1914 and who had emerged as a possible rival for the PUS-ship, slowly descended into a physical and mental prostration, sedated by alcohol.¹⁹

By 1916, Crowe's reputation was as high as it had ever been. And yet, when Nicolson, worn out by the continuous grind of war-time diplomacy, retired in June 1916, he was passed over for promotion in favour of Hardinge *redivivus*. At the root of this was a vitriolic, public campaign against Crowe by that organ of the semi-literate masses, the *Daily Mail*, on account of his German connections, both real and mostly assumed. Its lurid allegations were much amplified by the frenzied super-patriotic activism of the suffragette-turned-"Hun"-basher Christabel Pankurst. Crowe himself claimed to "have no feelings whatever as to anything said about me in a newspaper."²⁰ And, indeed, at one level, the campaign against him, which portrayed him as the organising intelligence behind a vast pan-German conspiracy, was the fantastic product of the perfervid imagination of frustrated zealots. Their ability to cause political damage, however, was very real. The Foreign Office had come under persistent fire in press and parliament, and its political influence was now much diminished. Promoting Crowe could only exacerbate the department's own problems. Whatever his superior claims, it was practically impossible

now to advance him any further.²¹

Hardinge's return to Whitehall in the summer of 1916 inaugurated another round of internal intrigues against Crowe. The two did "not hit it off."²² For Crowe, Hardinge's return was symptomatic of the Office's decline in Whitehall, as he explained to Alfred Milner with typical vigour:

Crowe had seen Lord Milner that afternoon ... He had sent for him as an old friend. He complained of the F[oreign] Office. Crowe hit back. Whose fault is it? You gave us Balfour & Hardinge - you have ruined the F.O. - have deprived it of any initiative; made it into a Correspondenz Bureau. How are we to train men & have them ready for the Peace negotiations when they come?²³

For his part, Hardinge sought once again to block Crowe's eventual succession to the PUS-ship by advancing the claims of one of his protégées, so that his own plans to end his career at the Paris embassy would come to fruition.²⁴ Yet, Hardinge was no longer as powerful as he had been during his first spell as Permanent Under-Secretary. His intrigues began to unravel after Grey's resignation in December 1916. The new Foreign Secretary, Arthur Balfour, left him far less room for manoeuvre; nor did the new coalition government lift a finger to defend the former viceroy when his role in the Mesopotamian fiasco came under public scrutiny. Worse for him still, when the prime minister, David Lloyd George, appointed an outsider, the Earl of Derby, as the new ambassador to France in the spring of 1918, Hardinge's own career seemed to have reached a *cul de sac*. Finally, Lord Robert Cecil, who had been given the somewhat anomalous position of Assistant Secretary of State, set about establishing a new political department responsible for the affairs of the post-Ottoman Middle East. In September 1918, he moved Crowe, rather than the Hardinge protégé Ronald Graham, to lead the new department.²⁵

Crowe's transfer from the blockade ministry marked the return to political work. It was "a splendid opportunity to bring into being a proper department for dealing with the complex questions of oriental diplomacy, in a less amateurish manner than they have hitherto been dealt with by the F.O."²⁶ But it also meant that Hardinge's final intrigue against Crowe had been check-mated. Following the merger of the Foreign Office and the diplomatic service, in September 1918, Crowe remained the only Assistant Under-Secretary, and thus the sole candidate eventually to succeed Hardinge.²⁷

Crowe's unrivalled pre-eminence was confirmed by his performance at the Paris Peace Conference. On paper, the British delegation was led by Lloyd George, seconded by Hardinge. But it was Crowe who provided the energetic impulse. Hardinge's star was waning fast, moreover, as the premier had "decided to cut out the F.O. altogether."²⁸ By March 1919, frustrated by his isolation, he faded into the background, while Crowe oversaw a resurgence of Foreign Office influence. Indeed, he remained at Paris after the German treaty was signed to settle any unfinished business. He carried, Atlas-like, much of the burden of the work of the British delegation.²⁹

From the autumn of 1918, Crowe led the Office's preparations for the peace conference. He harboured no illusions about the logistical problems the international gathering in the French capital would very likely entail, though perhaps not even he quite anticipated the extent to which conference business would be conducted on the "*ad hoc ad nauseam*" principle, as Alan Sharp has observed.³⁰ Crowe's disdain for the amateur-statesmen with whom he, the professional foreign policy expert, had to deal did little to encourage great expectations of what could be achieved at Paris: "Lloyd George orator who reads no papers and does no work. Balfour reads no papers and has no grasp of Foreign Affairs; Curzon getting old & gaga; Milner probably the best of the lot; Smuts a South African who fraternizes with Londoners & some believe works for peace."³¹ Yet his fears were well founded. Lloyd George, more especially, was disinclined to read official submissions. Worse, he did not seem to "know from one day to the next what he wants."³²

The opening weeks of the conference were "a time of Argument and no Decision".³³ Eventually, the Allied leaders adopted the committee system that Hardinge and the Foreign Office librarian Alwyn Parker had favoured from the beginning. Crowe was appointed the British delegate on the Coordinating Committee. This position gave him effective control over the information flow from the separate territorial commissions of experts to the "Council of Ten". And there was no doubt that Crowe was very much in control.³⁴

At Paris, Crowe relied for his assistants on former members of the Political Intelligence Department (PID). There had been no significant contact with them until the autumn of 1918. But during the immediate preparations for the conference and then at the conference he worked closely with PID experts on the various territorial issues before the Allied

leaders.³⁵ The relationship between Crowe and his juniors was characterized by a curious dialectic. The latter's admiration for Crowe bordered on hero-worship: "Crowe exercises a somewhat visionary sway over me", confessed Harold Nicolson, "but it is a real suzerainty to have suppressed me on one point which I am keen about [surrendering Cyprus]."³⁶ And herein lay the key to that relationship. The assistants imbibed some of his pragmatism: "He is realistic: wants facts, not ideas, however beautiful."³⁷ Even so, in turn, Crowe came to appreciate some of their idealism.³⁸

Crowe was profoundly concerned about the international changes the war had wrought, and about their implications for Britain's security interests. Woodrow Wilson's League of Nations scheme had little to recommend itself to him. He did not doubt the force of the president's idealism, but thought that "we ought to insist upon a clear definition of Wilson's 14 points."³⁹ To Crowe's mind, what came to be dismissed as "old diplomacy" in reality reflected the immutable essence of Great Power politics. This had already been the main thrust of his critique of Cecil's league plan in 1916. In a forensic dissection of the Cecilian scheme he emphasized the role of the national interest as the bedrock of all foreign policy and the continued significance of the military dimension of international politics. Above all:

[t]he balance of power reappears as the fundamental problem. To prevent the possibility of any one State or group of States pursuing ... a policy of aggression and domination, nothing will serve but adequate force. Arbitration and conferences have their utility and serve their limited purpose. Their utility is likely to grow with the development of modern thought. But it is a necessary and preliminary condition of the functioning of general conferences as the guarantors of peace, that the community of nations has effectively organised force for the defence of the right. Whether and how this can be done, is primarily a military question.⁴⁰

In terms of the territorial arrangements, Crowe was not directly involved in the German treaty. He accepted that the new Czechoslovak state would incorporate the Sudeten German areas, even though, as he pointed out, this was in breach of the principle of national self-determination. Privately, indeed, he suggested that a transfer of these areas to Germany might become necessary in the future.⁴¹ In the East, Crowe's views ran similarly counter to Allied decision-making: "They have plumped for a large Poland, with Danzig and a large stretch of territory dividing East Prussia from the rest of Germany. I have from time