



HER MAJESTY'S REPRESENTATIVES.

WHEN Lord Bacon wrote "Of Negotiating" he applied the principles of his time to men's dealings with each other in the ordinary affairs of life; and these principles have been held as equally applicable to the transactions of sovereigns and statesmen in regard to international affairs. "If you would work any man," he says, "you must either know his nature and fashions, and so

lead him; or his ends, and so *persuade* him; or his weakness and disadvantages, and so *awe* him; or those that have interest in him, and so *govern* him." We have here, in a nutshell, the ancient philosophy and the history of all diplomacy. The practice of sending ambassadors from one country to another originated in the desire of one to "work" the other, and according as it was intended to lead, or persuade, or awe, or govern, the various methods indicated have been adopted.

Whatever may have been the character and aims of British diplomacy in days gone by, the duties of Her Majesty's representatives abroad are now practically defined as being—first, that of keeping the Government well informed of all that may concern our interests; and, secondly, that of protecting and defending, if necessary, the persons and property of our fellow-countrymen residing in the countries in which representatives are stationed. Our ambassador is, so to speak, the eye of the Government directed to a particular spot; he ought, therefore, to be thoroughly acquainted with the course of policy pursued at that spot, the movements of parties, the characters and disposition of individual statesmen, and the material and commercial resources of the nation at whose Court he resides. By negotiating "treaties of commerce," and watching over the interests of our gigantic trade with foreign countries, Her Majesty's representatives perform duties of the highest possible importance to us as a nation.

Since the Congress of Vienna, it has been usual to divide representatives into three great classes: "Ambassadors," "Envoys," and "Ministers Resident," or "Chargés d'Affaires;" but our Government has not always restricted itself to this classification. At present we have six "Ambassadors-Extraordinary and Plenipotentiaries," as they are described in the Foreign Office Returns; fourteen "Envoys-Extraordinary and Ministers-Plenipotentiary;" three "Ministers-Plenipotentiary;" ten "Ministers-Resident;" four "Chargés d'Affaires," and five "Political Agents." Besides these, there are thirty-seven "Consuls-General," one hundred and thirty-six "Consuls," four hundred and thirty-nine "Vice-Consuls," and fifty-two "Consular Agents." There are thus no fewer than seven hundred and six persons holding office as representa-

tives of the Queen and people of England in various parts of the world, in addition to the Secretaries, "Attachés paid," "Attachés unpaid," and other subordinate officials connected with the more important embassies.

The terms "Extraordinary" and "Plenipotentiary" appear to have been added to the titles "Ambassador" and "Minister" respectively for the sake of rank or of ceremonial distinction: the distinction being practically without any difference whatever.

First in rank and dignity among Her Majesty's representatives stand "Ambassadors-Extraordinary," and next to these are "Envoys-Extraordinary" and "Ministers-Plenipotentiary." These are the prizes of the diplomatic service, and are generally held by men who have worked their way upward through all the grades of the profession; though on special occasions statesmen of distinguished ability and character are appointed who have had no experience of diplomatic duties. Both ambassadors and envoys are accredited direct to the sovereigns of the countries to which they are sent, and have the right of personal access to those sovereigns. An ambassador usually receives special instructions previous to his departure from London, prescribing his behaviour and the general tone he is to adopt in the transaction of official business. These instructions are given by the Foreign Secretary in writing, supplemented by oral communications. He is furnished with "credentials," in which his name and character are duly set forth, and the foreign Court is therein requested to give full "credence" to his official statements and explanations. These "credentials" are signed by the Queen herself, and convey an assurance that she will confirm and support the acts of her representative. An open copy of this important document is provided for presentation to the Foreign Minister of the State to which the ambassador is accredited as soon as he arrives at his post. The original is sealed, and is presented to the sovereign at an audience given for this special purpose. The journey of an ambassador was formerly a very stately affair. Five-and-thirty years ago it was the custom to send our ambassadors in ships of war; now, however, they usually travel by the ordinary means. The ceremonies attendant upon the reception of an ambassador, though less magnificent than those of olden times, are still characterised by great pomp and courtly formality. An ambassador of the highest rank sends a secretary to notify his arrival to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, forwarding at the same time the "copy" of his credentials, and asking for an audience with the sovereign. An officer of the royal household is then sent to the embassy, charged with the duty of conducting the ambassador into the presence of the sovereign. The ambassador is conveyed to the palace in a carriage drawn by six horses, sometimes provided by the Court. He is accompanied by the whole of his suite, and on reaching the palace is received by the proper officers in full uniform, and is

saluted with military honours. The sovereign, attended by the members of his family and by the great officers of State, stands ready to welcome him. The ambassador and the principal gentlemen of his suite bow thrice as they approach; his Majesty bares his head as he greets the ambassador, then by a sign requests him to cover his head, and at the same time covers his own. Both sit down, and the ambassador delivers a short complimentary speech, the matter of which has been made known to the Foreign Minister before the audience commenced. He, of course, refers to his "credentials," which he takes from the hands of his secretary and delivers to the sovereign or the chief minister in attendance. A brief reply from the monarch or his minister brings the reception to a close; the ambassador then rises and, uncovering his head, bows three times as before, and retires from the audience-chamber. This ceremony concluded, Her Majesty's representative enters forthwith upon his official duties, and enjoys all the honours and privileges of his order.

The ceremony of reception is, with some slight variations, the same at all the principal European Courts, with the exception of that of the Sultan. Time was when the reception of an ambassador at Constantinople was the most gorgeous of all such spectacles, and it was in some respects perfectly unique. The ambassador and the members of his staff were required to attire themselves in strange costumes, provided by the Sultan, and on reaching the presence-chamber, at the end of a long and grotesque procession, they were seized under the arms by two stout chamberlains, and being lifted off their feet, were borne in that uncomfortable fashion before the Sultan. Still holding the ambassador aloft with one hand, the chamberlains took hold of his head with the other, and made him nod dutifully in token of reverence. The members of the suite were also made to pay their obeisances in the same ludicrous manner. This was in the days of Turkey's power and splendour, however; now, it is said, hardly anything could be more undignified than the manner in which the Sultan receives the accredited ministers of Christian Powers.

Immediately after his official reception at Court the ambassador announces the fact to the Ministers of State and the Corps Diplomatique, by sending a secretary or attaché to each in turn. He is then visited by these distinguished personages in succession, and after he has himself paid formal visits to them at their official residences, his establishment at the British Embassy may be considered complete. The privileges of Her Majesty's representatives are of very considerable value. By a common international understanding, the persons of an ambassador and his suite, his dwelling-house and carriages, are all deemed part of his own nation, and are therefore inviolable. No process of law, civil or criminal, can issue against him, his suite, or his servants. He pays no taxes, and is allowed to receive all goods from abroad free of customs duties. He does not enjoy the privilege of "franking" letters sent by post, but is allowed to

employ his own "courier" without incurring the penalties of an infringement of postal monopoly. These and other ambassadorial privileges are accorded on the principle that the representative is assumed to be invested, for the time being, with the sacredness of the sovereign by whom he is accredited.

Although French is almost universally employed as the language of personal intercourse among diplomats, Her Majesty's representatives use their own tongue in all written communications with the Courts at which they reside. In transmitting communications which they have received, it is usual to annex translations for the use of the Government at home. The correspondence kept up between our ambassadors and the Foreign Office is very extensive. Besides the despatches on political subjects, which rank as "State papers" of the highest possible importance, they transmit from time to time reports as to the trade, commerce, and social progress of the people among whom they live, which are of incalculable value to ourselves. Prince Metternich says, in his recently published "Autobiography," that "people who make history have no time to write it;" our ambassadors, however, not only "make history," by the great transactions in which they take part, but they also "write history," in the form of despatches, reports, and memoranda.

These documents are printed in the "Blue-books" annually presented to Parliament, and thus supply the materials of which not only future historians, but present-day writers on political economy and social progress, may freely avail themselves. It is said to have been the boast of the elder Pitt that "not a gun could be fired throughout the world without Britain knowing why." It is the prouder boast of the British Diplomatic Service of to-day that no invention, or discovery, or enterprise of value to mankind can be originated in any part of the world without its being made known in England.

There is still another class of "Her Majesty's Representatives" of whom our readers may wish to know something, especially as they may not unfrequently be met with by Englishmen when travelling on the Continent: these are the Queen's Foreign Service Messengers. There are twelve of these important functionaries, whose business it is to bear the despatches which are forwarded from the Foreign Office to our foreign ambassadors, and *vice versa*. These gentlemen wear a distinguishing uniform, which is everywhere recognisable: a dark blue coat, vest edged with gold lace, buttoned close to the throat, trousers of "Oxford mixture," with a scarlet cord down the side-seams; the gilt buttons on their coat are embossed with the royal cipher, encircled by crown and garter; a blue cloth cap, with leather peak and band of black braid, the royal cipher and crown in gilt being placed on its front. Suspended from the neck by a dark blue riband, he carries a badge of regulation size, with royal crown and silver greyhound pendant. The rules of the service require that this uniform, and especially the badge, must always be worn by Queen's messengers when travelling, but the badge must not be worn at any other time.

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