

Diplomatists and Their Pretty Decorations

By GEORGE A. SCHREINER

DIPLOMATISTS are fond of decorations. The older men have enough of them to decorate a Christmas tree, and some of them delight in wearing all this junk at receptions, levees, dinners, what not. It is so distinguishing, you know. It impresses the crowd, and if there is one thing the diplomatist loves more than his profession and woman, it is the admiration of even the scullery maid, if he can get it. The unreal world in which his thoughts revolve heeds barely the real values of life. Age makes little difference, because the real human beings in the service do not grow old in it. Indiscretions, such as any normal man may become guilty of, remove the individual that might later combine the qualities of manliness with the ability required in a diplomatic career; the others drop out of their own volition.

The newspaperman has in mind a certain diplomatist who wanted to get a decoration known as *la grande étoile de la Roumanie*. This bauble is large and pretty, as it were. When conferred, it is set with rhinestones, but there is no objection to having real brilliants put into it. If the Rumanian Government wanted to supply the diamonds needed for all the *étoiles* it bestows in the course of a year, the peasant would be taxed to death, and there is nothing gained by killing the goose that lays at least the golden egg—even without adamantite incrustations of the variety implied. So it happens that the star is given with imitations.

The diplomatist wanted to get this medal for unrendered service. The Rumanian Government had never reacted to the hints, and so the man decided to buy the thing and be done with it. He instructed the diplomatic courier to get him one on his next trip to Paris. A jeweler in the *Rue de la Paix* was visited by the courier, who found that the last ready-made specimen had just been sent to the new Khedive of Egypt, in reward for warm sentiments expressed by him on the occasion of Rumania's entry into the war. But the jeweler wanted to be obliging. Surely, he would make a *grande étoile*, but while the order could be taken now, together with a deposit, it would be necessary to submit for inspection the patent of the Rumanian Government by which the decoration was transferred. That was too much red tape for the diplomatist, so that order was abandoned.

There was another decoration the man desired. Naming it would lead to the identification of the diplomatist and that must be avoided. This time the diplomatic courier was not sent, because it could be had right in the capital; in fact, the order was one of the honors conferred by the government to which the diplomatist was accredited. The liveried doorman was sent to the jeweler. He was successful. He returned with the decoration and the bill.

The diplomatist was overjoyed, but did not know where the thing was worn. Taking it for granted that the doorman would know, the diplomatist asked him to do the necessary. The diplomatist and the doorman stepped before the large mirror, and the latter pinned the decoration to the business suit of the former, five inches below the heart. When the large *quid pro quo* had been pressed into the eager palm of the doorman, and when the door had closed behind him, the diplomatist admired himself in the mirror, not knowing that a flabbergasted secretary was looking on.

It was not the secretary who spoke first of the matter. The story leaked out because the jeweler who had sold the thing examined the official gazette for notice that His Excellency had been thus honored. Not finding that notice, the jeweler took alarm and communicated with the foreign office. The foreign office got in touch with the person that conferred such honors, and the latter was so lacking in humor that he did not confer the decoration in the regular manner afterward. Nevertheless, the government of the diplomatist continued to insist upon its representative being taken seriously. That was the tragic part of it. Nor

was this all. The strange transaction in decorations came to the attention of the government which the man represented. That government never took the diplomatist to task. The case was then put before a number of legislators. But these men were busy just then voting appropriations for the war, and could not be induced to look upon the penchant for decorations as anything but the foible of a rich old man. Yet the assertion may be made that that diplomatist would have done a good many things to get these decorations *honestly*, and if not these, then others still valued higher in the world of social shams.

The inertia displayed by those who should have examined the case is due to the averseness of governments to take the governed behind the scenes. The cupboards of governments are full of skeletons of this sort. To show a single one might impair the doctrine of governmental infallibility, and in diplomacy especially, that would be fatal. The craft is all simulation and deception at its best, and if it were shown that most of the actors are clowns in disguise the betterment of international intercourse might really come about.

There is another illusion that must be dispelled. The apologists of modern diplomacy have maintained that, while its methods are open to criticism, much good has been done by it in making the intercourse between nations easier than was once the case. No doubt, that is true, but we may ask the question: When was this intercourse difficult? Civilized nations have always observed toward one another, and their individual members, the dictates of humaneness as understood at the time. We find the proof of this in the oldest treaty of record, the complete text of which is known.

There was concluded on Tybi 21, in the 21st year of the reign of Pharaoh Rameses (November 28, 1279 B. C.) in the city of Pa-Ramessu-Mery-Amen, Lower Egypt, a treaty of alliance between the minis-

ters of the monarch named, and Tarte-sebu and Rames, ambassadors of Kheta-Sar, king of the Hittites in Syria. Despite the quaintness of the terms used in the documents, the treaty fits well into our own day, showing what little progress there has been.

After promising one another aid and assistance in case of attack by others, the two high contracting parties swear fealty to one another in an almost endless number of "forevers." In that treaty everything was to last *forever*, the esteem of the monarchs for one another, especially.

"Never shall enmity come to separate them, forever," says the *anu*, and "never shall the chief of the Kheta make an invasion of the land of Egypt, forever, to carry off anything from it. Never shall Ramessu make an invasion of the land of the Kheta to take anything from it, forever."

It does not matter how short the duration of these "forevers" was, the great fact is pointed out in the following excerpts from the treaty:

"If there be one from the city, if there be one from the pastures, if there be one from the.... (desert?) of the land of Ramessu, and they shall come to the chief of the Kheta, never shall the chief receive them, but shall give them back to Ramessu; or if there be two of the people, who, unknown, shall come to the land of the Kheta to do service for another, never shall they be allowed to stay in the land of the Kheta, but shall be returned to Ramessu, or if there be one great man coming to the land of the Kheta, he shall be returned to Ramessu...."

"If there shall flee one of the people of the land of Egypt, if there be two, if there be three, and come to the chief of the Kheta, he shall take them and send them back to Ramessu. And any of the people who are taken and sent back to Ramessu, let it not be that his criminal action is raised against him, in giving to destruction his house, his wives, or his children, or in slaying him, or in removing his eyes, or his ears, or his mouth (tongue) or his feet, and he shall not have any criminal action raised against him."

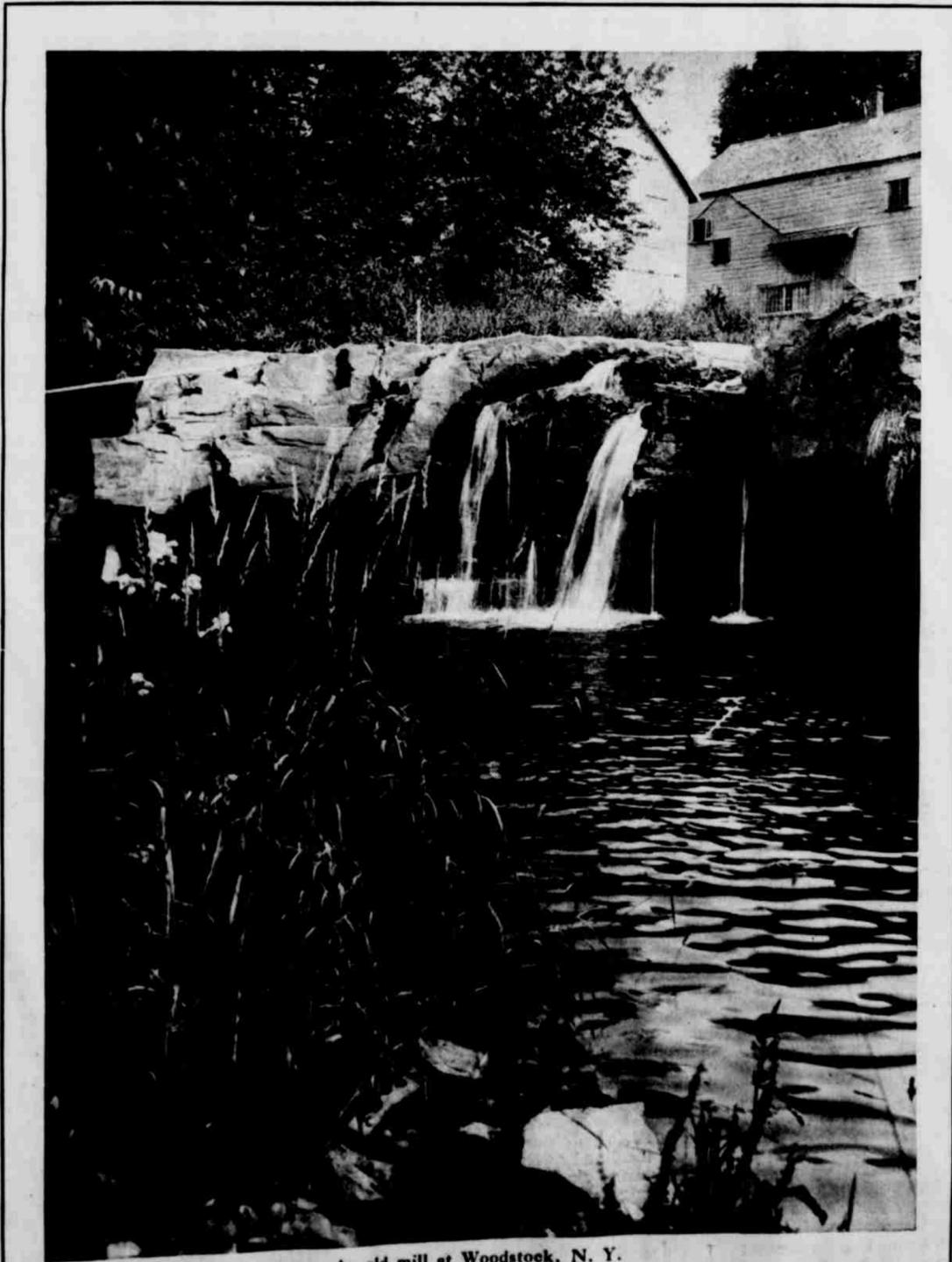
To hear modern diplomacy talk one would take it for granted that it was the innovator of all that is humane in modern international intercourse. Yet here we have the proof that extradition under humane guaranties was known and practiced exactly 3,200 years ago.

Lest it be accepted that diplomacy did away with the cruel punishments that were not to be visited upon the extradited it must be stated that these were at that time a part of the municipal law of all communities, persisting long into our own age, for even in enlightened England it was the fashion a little more than a century ago to cut off the ears of certain classes of malefactors. In fact, there have been times in our own era, when extradition was not carried out under the humane stipulations of the Rameses-Kheta-Sar treaty.

How old some of the fundamentals in international law are may be gleaned from the fact that the first mention of ambassadors dates back 4,880 years, and reference is made to them in connection with their duties as parliamentaries for a besieged city and the inviolability of their persons.

The ancients made as many treaties as we. There were times when the countries about the Mediterranean were divided into Triple Alliances and Triple Ententes. The Punic War was in every sense the fit equal of the Great War of 1914-18. These treaties were based on mutual assistance, and as such followed in the main the broader lines of international law, and following them they led to catastrophes of the sort we have just lived through.

There has been little improvement in international relations since the days of the treaty of Pa-Ramessu-Mery-Amen.



An old mill at Woodstock, N. Y.