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PILGRIMAGES TO OTTAWA : CANADIAN-AMERICAN DIPLOMACY, 1903-13

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When James Bryce, Britain's ambassador to the United States, 1907-1913, paid his last annual visit to Ottawa in March — the sixth of his official pilgrimages — he remarked upon that unique succession of events and then proudly turned to his embassy's record. "It has been my privilege," said he, addressing Ottawa's Canadian Club, "to sign either eleven or twelve treaties relating to the affairs of Canada. And I am happy to say that . . . we have, so far as human prevision can go . . . dealt with all the questions that are likely to arise between the United States and Canada."¹

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* *

For many years, British, American, and Canadian diplomatists had talked about "cleaning the slate." They meant, of course, the diplomatic adjustment of the outstanding Canadian-American questions: the fisheries, inland and oceanic; the delimitation of the Alaskan panhandle and other portions of the frontier; reciprocal trade relations; conservation of the fur seals in the North Pacific; the joint use and management of the Great Lakes and other border waters; revision of the Rush-Bagot agreement; and other, less irksome differences. Some of the questions were as old as the American Revolution; others, as new as the 'Nineties; but, taken singly or together, they were unsettling, rasping the Canadian-American relationship and jeopardizing the recent Anglo-American rapprochement.

In 1898, the United States and Canada established a Joint High Commission and directed it to resolve most of the questions listed above.² The commissioners toiled through three seasons before they gave up and adjourned, unable to decide the most difficult problems facing them, particularly Alaska. As a diplomatic device, the JHC was too cumbersome and too public for compromises. Furthermore,

¹ James Bryce, "Thoughts on Imperial Policy," *Addresses Delivered before the Canadian Club of Ottawa, 1912-1913* (Ottawa, 1913).

² Robert Craig Brown, *Canada's National Policy, 1883-1900: A Study in Canadian-American Relations* (Princeton, 1964), Chs. X and XI; Charles S. Campbell, Jr., *Anglo-American Understanding, 1898-1903*, Baltimore, 1957), Chs. 3 and 4.

Canada had woven all questions into a crazy-quilt of concessions and counter-concessions; and their commissioners refused to settle any one question without settling all of them. Until the Alaskan boundary had been determined, nothing else could be attempted. Accordingly the slate remained cluttered until 1903, when both parties agreed upon a formula (the Hay-Herbert Convention) by which to reach a "friendly and final adjustment" of their Alaskan differences.

At first, Sir Wilfrid Laurier regarded the convention "as a decided move towards a final settlement."³ He talked about reassembling the JHC, his optimism stirred by reports from Sir Michael Herbert, the British ambassador. More than once, the latter reassured him that the American Secretary of State, John Hay, had virtually promised that the Chief Justice and one or more of his associates would sit on the Alaska Boundary Tribunal as "impartial jurists."⁴ Always credulous, frequently careless, Herbert mistook Hay's implications for guarantees.⁵ He also placed too much faith in other American friends, John W. Foster and Henry Cabot Lodge.⁶ They assured him that they would secure the Senate's ratification by converting some of its enemies, including Senator George Turner of Washington.

No diplomat was more deluded by his friends. Few countries have been more ill-served than Canada. No sooner had the Senate approved the pact than President Roosevelt announced the names of his "impartial jurists": his own secretary of war, Elihu Root, and Senators Lodge and Turner, whose partisan views had been frequently and publicly aired.

Scarcely had Laurier recovered from this spirit-and-letter violation of the convention when he heard, indirectly, that the king had ratified it. Then, while Laurier was protesting the president's transgression and the king's precipitous act, he received the final indignity. Even as his government was answering a cable from London soliciting Canada's concurrence in accepting and dealing with "a situa-

³ The Earl of Minto to the Colonial Secretary, 9 February 1903, reporting a conversation with Laurier. Governor-General's Numbered Files, No. 173, Vol. 7 (a), Public Archives of Canada (hereafter cited as PAC).

⁴ Sir Michael Herbert to Lord Lansdowne, 24 October, 12 December, and 19 December 1902. Lansdowne Papers, Series F.O. 800, No. 143. Public Record Office (hereafter cited as PRO). Laurier received copies of the Herbert-Lansdowne correspondence.

⁵ At the same time, in his ministry, Herbert overlooked added words in the ill-fated Hay-Bond Convention which would have given the United States most-favored nation status in Newfoundland's commerce.

⁶ Herbert to Lansdowne, 12 and 13 February 1903. Lansdowne Papers, F.O. 800, No. 143, PRO.

tion . . . full of difficulty," he learned — again second-hand — that ratifications had been exchanged.⁷

At this point, Laurier could only conclude that Britain had deliberately and deceitfully driven him and his country to accept an unpalatable arrangement. Assuming the diplomatic game was up, he promised London he would accept the situation; but he also said that he would print all the correspondence, so that Canada could understand the whole affair, especially the way in which its government's assent had been obtained. Lest his meaning be unclear, Laurier bluntly told the governor general that for Britain to exchange ratifications while seeking Canada's concurrence was "a very unceremonious and uncourteous proceeding, nothing short of a slap in the face." Though he would go on with the case, he warned that "the responsibility [for it] must rest upon the proper shoulders."⁸

The announcement, in October, of the Alaskan award and the news that both Canadian judges had refused to sign it, reached Canada at the same time and struck the country with an explosive force. Immediately revitalized was the legend that Canada had never won a diplomatic contest between the United States and Great Britain. Here and there, men remarked bitterly about the stacked-deck dealt out by Roosevelt; but such conduct could be expected, given the stereotyped picture of Americans.⁹ Nothing, however, was known of Roosevelt's outrageous interference in British politics and thus the worst villain in the piece escaped detection. Probably for most Canadians — certainly for Laurier — most of the blame for the Alaska decision was placed upon Great Britain and the only British judge who had sat on the tribunal, Lord Alverstone.¹⁰

Speaking in the House three days after the award's announcement, Laurier argued that Britain and Alverstone were responsible for the decision.¹¹ He implied that Britain had brought the question before Canada in the first place and that he and his government had

⁷ Onslow to Minto, 26 February, 1903 and Minto to the Colonial Office, 6 March, 1903, Governor-General's Numbered Files, No. 173, Vol. 7(a).

⁸ Laurier to Minto, 6 March, 1903. Minto Papers, Vol. 7, PAC.

⁹ Memorandum of conversation with Laurier, 14 February, 1905. Grey of Howick Papers, Vol. 1, PAC. "For Americans individually he has a high regard; but for them in their collective capacity, he has the worst opinion. They are aggressive, grasping, ungenerous, and horse-traders in the worst sense."

¹⁰ *Toronto Globe*, 21 October 1903; *Ottawa Citizen*, 21 October 1903; *Montreal Herald*, 22 October 1903; *Ottawa Evening Journal*, 22 October 1903; *Halifax Morning Chronicle*, 21 October and 10 December 1903. Cf. Fred White to John D. Moodie, 25 November 1903, Royal Canadian Mounted Police Papers, RCMP, 1906, No. 188.

¹¹ *Official Report of the Debates of the House of Commons of the Dominion of Canada*, 9th Parliament, 3rd Session, 23 October 1903, p. 14812 *et seq.*

agreed to adjudicate their claims, lest a quarrel start over disputed ground and end in "conflict and bloodshed." He told the House that he had protested against Roosevelt's judges, only to be overborne by Britain. He had accepted the British suggestion that Alverstone serve, thinking "that in the hands of a gentleman of distinction our interests would be secure." But now all had been lost. He could only regret that Canada was not a free diplomatic agent and that Canadians had to "deal with questions affecting... [themselves] through the instrumentality of the British ambassador."

Laurier made no more pronouncements on Canadian diplomacy until the House met again in mid-March, 1904, and Robert L. Borden, leader of the opposition, managed to extract another policy-statement. Borden asked whether the Joint High Commission was still alive and would ever be reconvened. Laurier replied that the JHC stood just as it did when it was adjourned.¹² Then he commented that it was "not the purpose of the Canadian government to ask for favours of any kind whatever." If the United States wanted to reassemble the JHC, "we are always ready to... negotiate with them on fair terms, but... if new negotiations are to be made, it must be on their initiative."

Taken together, Laurier's assertions in the House spelled out a new doctrine: that there would be no more Canadian pilgrimages to Washington for any purpose and that Canada would place little or no faith in Britain's Washington embassy. The doctrine had a lasting impact upon London. Because of it, neither the Colonial Office nor the Foreign Office dared do anything positive about cleaning the rest of the Canadian-American slate. When the assistant under-secretary of state in the Foreign Office ordered a memorandum drawn up about Canadian-American bonding privileges in November, 1903, the secretary, Lord Lansdowne, approved its being sent to the Colonial Office but doubted if it were wise to say anything to the Canadians about any question, however minor, for some time.¹³ The Colonial Office agreed. The permanent under-secretary replied as follows: "As to bonding privileges & other questions now open between Canada & the U.S. I do not think we had better raise any of them at the present time. If Canada wishes for an early settlement of any of them, I shd. leave her to say so, but in her present temper we should get no thanks for taking the initiative."¹⁴ Two years later, London's opinion was unchanged;

¹² *Ibid.*, 9th Parliament, 4th Session, 14 March 1904, pp. 69-77.

¹³ Memorandum by Reginald Tower, 3 November 1903, together with minute by F. H. Villiers and Lord Lansdowne. F.O. 5/2608, PRO.

¹⁴ Enclosed in a note from Villiers to Lansdowne, 13 November 1903. F.O. 5/2608, PRO.

and the result was a policy of inaction and/or non-interference which explains why, when steps were taken once again to adjust the Canadian-American differences, Britain wisely stayed in the corner.¹⁵

Since Canada was unwilling to assume the initiative and Britain would not, it was up to the United States. But all that occurred during the next few years were two rounds of shadow-boxing between Laurier and Senator Charles W. Fairbanks, American chairman of the JHC. After fitful sparring, the first ended with an agreement to meet informally before reconvening the JHC. Suspiciously, however, neither Laurier nor Fairbanks found a convenient time or place for the meeting. The second round was doomed from the start. Roosevelt induced Fairbanks, now his vice-president elect, to pick up the correspondence and make a plausible effort to reconvene the JHC.¹⁶ He wanted Fairbanks to try and to fail, thereby allowing him (Roosevelt) to appear as the champion of reciprocity (a subject about which he knew almost nothing) and, at the same time, frustrate the growing reciprocal-trade movement in the United States and the Democrats who were backing it.¹⁷

It seems clear that nothing could be accomplished in Canadian-American diplomacy so long as its direction lay in the hands of Hay and Roosevelt. By now, Hay was an old man whose recurring illnesses kept him from the State Department. The formulation and effecting of foreign policy fell into Roosevelt's hands and he was not too interested in, or knowledgeable about, Canadian-American relations. Until he found a vigorous and imaginative secretary of state, there would be no pilgrimages to Ottawa.

Needed north of the line was someone to replace Lord Minto as governor general.¹⁸ Few men entered Rideau Hall with less qualifications for the office and a more inhibiting anti-Americanism than Minto. When he came to Canada in the fall of 1898, he carried on much the same life he had always known — hunting, fishing, riding, and shooting. And he cultivated the same prejudices. Three months after his arrival, he wrote his brother that it was "all very well for people in England to romance about the sentimental love

¹⁵ Minute by Villiers on Colonial Office to Foreign Office, 1 August 1905. F.O. 5/2622, PRO.

¹⁶ Roosevelt to Fairbanks, 12 November 1904. Elting T. Morison and John Blum, eds., *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1951-4), IV, 1030.

¹⁷ See the Fairbanks-Laurier correspondence in the Laurier Papers, PAC; also clippings from *New York Sun*, *New York Tribune*, and *Washington Post*, enclosed in Sir Mortimer Durand to Lansdowne, 6 December 1904, 10 and 13 January 1905, F.O. 5/2608; also Roosevelt to Fairbanks, 2 March 1905, Roosevelt Papers, Library of Congress (hereafter cited as LC).

¹⁸ John Buchan, *Lord Minto: A Memoir* (London, 1924).

of the Anglo-Saxon Races on either side of the Atlantic... but mercifully England has the ocean between her and her love... What the Canadian sees and hears is constant Yankee bluff, and swagger, & that eventually he means to possess Canada for himself.”¹⁹

In Laurier’s judgement, though Minto came to Canada with no knowledge of constitutional affairs, he “took his duties to heart, and became an effective Governor, if sometimes very stiff.”²⁰ Such faint praise does not fit Minto as a Canadian-American diplomatist. He liked some Americans, especially social-climbing millionaires like Whitelaw Reid; and he enjoyed short holidays in the United States, staying at Reid’s posh place in the Adirondacks or with the “smart set” in Newport or Long Island. But, he cautioned his brother, “It is only the cream of... [the Americans] that one can accept as ordinary beings.” Most of them were not to be trusted; their “friendship... [was] absolutely unreliable.”²¹

Minto’s irrational outlook had a damping effect upon Canadian-American relations. He traded prejudices with Laurier, without offering any alternatives. He did not use occasions that fate bestowed to improve relations. At the least moment, he failed to attend President McKinley’s second inaugural ceremony; and he found it impossible to attend his funeral. In the first instance, he could see no way around general orders which confined him to Canada without special permission.²² In the second, which occurred when the Duke of Cornwall was visiting Canada, Minto did not go because the service was scheduled earlier than anticipated. He took this decision despite the opposing views of his ministers and the duke himself.²³ It was one of those rare moments when Minto had too much to do. A month later – and against Laurier’s wishes – he and Cornwall squeezed a day and a half out of the royal tour and slaughtered nearly a thousand ducks in Manitoba.²⁴

Minto’s anti-Americanism cancelled a fence-mending expedition by the new British ambassador, Sir Mortimer Durand. Soon after his arrival in November, 1903, Durand discovered that Canadians believed the embassy “indifferent to Canadian opinion and interests”;

¹⁹ Minto to Peter Elliot, 26 February 1899. Minto Papers, Vol. 36, PAC.

²⁰ Buchan, *Minto*, pp. 122-3.

²¹ Minto to Peter Elliot, 28 September 1899. Minto Papers, Vol. 36, PAC.

²² Laurier to Minto, 21 February 1901, Minto Papers, Vol. 7, PAC; Lord Pauncefote to John Hay, 1 March 1901, Hay Papers, Vol. 21, I.

²³ Minto to Edward VII, 27 September 1901, Minto Papers, Vol. 25.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 25 October 1901. Cf. Buchan, *Minto*, 185-6. Minto was an incredible game-hog. On one occasion, he shot seventy ducks in thirty minutes; on another, 270 grouse in a single morning. See Arthur Sladen to Minto, 8 March 1907, Minto Papers, Vol. 23, PAC. Sladen had been Minto’s private secretary and was (then) Grey’s.

and he thought a visit to Ottawa, as the start of his term, might help "remove the impression."²⁵ When Hay told him of a new scheme for settling the fur seal question, he was surer than ever. But he did not go. Minto convinced him that the visit "would be resented as an attempt to put pressure upon . . . [the Canadians] rather than approved as an attempt to learn something of Canada and make the Embassy more fit to understand and safeguard Canadian interests."²⁶

When Sir Mortimer began his tour, he was markedly different from Minto. He had always believed — even at the height of the Venezuela crisis — that he understood Americans and, as Britain's ambassador, would be able to "get on" with them.²⁷ When Herbert suddenly died in the fall of 1903, Durand was given his chance; and viewed from a distance, he looked like a man designed by nature to meet all the requirements demanded by Roosevelt of the 20th-century courtier. He was a polo player, a tiger-shooter, and a Civil War "buff" who delighted as much in America's literature as in her history. He came to Washington with a splendid reputation won in the Indian civil service and in the foreign service. But despite these qualifications, Durand was only superficially suited for the post. Most of his diplomatic experience had been gained in India, Persia, and Spain, countries whose languid pace and undemocratic ways were so different from the hustle and bustle of Washington. Furthermore, he was naturally shy, slow in thought and speech; and at fifty-three, he had the physique and stamina of a fading matinee idol.

Sir Mortimer began his work with the best of intentions. He realized that the embassy did not know or serve Canada and that Canada did not know or trust it. In a feeble effort to learn more, he got the names of several Canadian newspapers and subscribed to two (both from Toronto) because (as he said) that was "about as much as we shall be able to read . . ."²⁸ He was always lamenting the lack of understanding and communication between his embassy and Ottawa, but he never did anything about it. Minto had easily put off an intended visit. However, Minto's successor, Earl Grey, was a very different sort. He instinctively saw the need for Ottawa and the embassy to know each other and periodically invited the

²⁵ Durand to Lansdowne, 6 May 1904. Lansdowne Papers, F.O. 800, No. 143, PRO.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 17 May 1904; also Durand to Minto, 28 June 1904, Minto Papers, Vol. 13, PAC.

²⁷ Brigadier-General Sir Percy Sykes, *The Right Honourable Sir Mortimer Durand, P.C., G.C.M.G., K.C.S.I., K.C.I.E., A Biography* (London, 1926), p. 265.

²⁸ Percy C. Wyndham to the Governor-General's Secretary, 11 January 1904, Governor-General's Numbered Files: Despatches from the British Minister at Washington, PAC.

ambassador to visit. But Durand readily deluded himself into thinking that diplomatic convention held him within the United States.²⁹ He made two "flying" trips to London on Canadian-American business but he did not take up Grey's invitation until the final year of his ambassadorship — and then only to spend a few summer days in Montreal, Quebec, and Murray Bay.

As ambassador, Durand's defects became increasingly evident to Roosevelt. His first impression of Sir Mortimer was favourable; Roosevelt liked his "looks."³⁰ About a year and a half later, he still liked his looks but found him slow and shy. Two and one-half years later, Roosevelt found him slow, shy, and stupid. "He seems to have a brain of about eight-guinea-pig power," he wrote his ambassador in London.³¹ "Why, under Heaven the English keep him here I do not know... but it is useless to have a creature of mutton-suet consistency like the good Sir Mortimer." In truth, he was not much use to Britain or the United States. In the spring of 1905, though he felt he should be keeping in touch with the president about Russo-Japanese treaty negotiations, he stayed away, buried in the Berkshires, lest Roosevelt misunderstand his presence in Washington. When the Morocco crisis occurred the next year, he did the same thing. Durand usually had the right instincts; but, too frequently, they were either undermined by self-doubt or diverted by the convictions of stronger men.

Other personal flaws began to appear. The ambassador became morbidly concerned with the seamy side of the American character. He grew strangely unsure of the new Secretary of State and convinced that all past secretaries had been unscrupulous men who had wormed half a continent out of Great Britain.³² He wrote more and more disparagingly about Roosevelt.³³ His political reports to the Foreign Office began to read like Street and Smith "thrillers."³⁴ And fortunately for the future of Canadian-American relations, Durand's guardian angel, Lord Lansdowne, left the Foreign Office when Balfour's government fell in December, 1905, allowing Roosevelt to put pressure upon a new secretary, Sir Edward Grey, and secure Durand's recall.

²⁹ Donald MacMaster to Laurier, 25 June 1906, Laurier Papers, Vol. 418, PAC.

³⁰ Roosevelt to Arthur Lee, 7 December 1903, Roosevelt Papers, Vol. 146, LC.

³¹ Roosevelt to Whitelaw Reid, 28 April 1906. Morison and Blum, *Letters of Roosevelt*, V, 230-51. See also *ibid.*, 27 August and 6 November 1906, Roosevelt Papers, Vol. 154, LC.

³² Sykes, *Durand*, 296-7.

³³ *Ibid.*, 298 and 300.

³⁴ Durand to Sir Edward Grey, 25 July and 21 September 1906. F.O. 371/158, PRO.

After John Hay's death in 1905, Roosevelt lured Elihu Root out of retirement and made him secretary of state. It was a superb choice. Root was an experienced, competent administrator who quickly mastered his new role. Despite differences in age and personality, he got along well with Roosevelt; and what was just as important, he got along well with the Senate. Unlike Hay, who regarded Senators as a lower form of animal life, Root drank with them, played poker with them, and consulted with them, appearing so often at weekly meetings of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations that the chairman "grew almost to regard him as a regular member."³⁵ The results were phenomenal. When Root left office, he had signed 103 treaties, conventions, and the like, of which only three failed because of the Senate.³⁶

In James Bryce's opinion, if Britain could ever offer decorations to American statesmen, Root would be the man.³⁷ He possessed so many personal qualities that made for diplomatic success. He kept his word and there were few leaks in his confidential correspondence. Though he always knew, in detail, the most complex questions facing him, he never battled over small points or argued legalistically. He was invariably "unflappable," always pragmatic. If a question seemed insoluble, such as trade relations with Canada or revision of the Rush-Bagot pact, he dropped it — and went ahead, working for attainable objects.

The first problem handed Root was the North Atlantic fisheries. Angered by the Senate's rejection of the Hay-Bond treaty, Newfoundland had embarked upon a policy to force the United States favorably to reconsider the treaty or suffer the consequences of a restricted and harassed fishery. Upon inquiry, Root discovered that the fisheries question was not only complicated but also entangled with other issues. He could not solve it without solving the Canadian fisheries, and he could not consider the Canadian fisheries without taking into account all the other Canadian-American problems. Small wonder, then, that he rose from a reconnaissance into the archives with the feeling that the Joint High Commission had "dissolved without settling anything and leaving our affairs with Great Britain in a mess."³⁸

³⁵ Shelby M. Cullom, *Fifty Years of Public Service* (Chicago, 1911), 366.

³⁶ Philip Jessup, *Elihu Root*, 2 vols. (New York, 1938 and 1964), 451-3.

³⁷ Bryce to Hardinge, 8 February 1909, Sir Edward Grey Papers, F.O. 800, No. 81, PRO. Baron Hardinge of Penhurst was Permanent Under-Secretary in the Foreign Office, 1906-10.

³⁸ Root to the President, 6 November 1931, Chandler P. Anderson Papers, Vol. 20, LC.

Root's research also revealed the name of Chandler P. Anderson, a highly intelligent New York lawyer whose personal knowledge of Canadian-American relations reached back to the days of the Bering Sea Claims Commission. In November, 1905, Root hired him to write a general report on the JHC. This first effort, like all its successors, was detailed, complete, and accurate. Pleased with it, Root directed Anderson to "take up... the questions before the Joint High Commission and bring them down to date, putting them in such shape as to be ready for use whenever opportunity came up for further negotiations with Great Britain."³⁹ The work was done so well that Root retained Anderson as special advisor and confidential negotiator. It was Anderson who handled the bulk of the Canadian-American work in both Roosevelt's and Taft's administrations; without him, as Root and others readily admitted, the successful negotiation of so many Canadian-American treaties "would have been impossible."⁴⁰

In late February, 1906, Root called Durand into his office and said that he wanted to take advantage of the absence of ill will between Canada and the United States "to examine and settle if possible a number of questions... which may hereafter give rise to friction."⁴¹ He wondered whether Britain would be interested in discussing, informally, various questions. If so, could Ottawa send someone down to explain Canada's views and help Durand and Root reach a "general understanding"?

Britain's response was uncertain. Durand was eager but not optimistic, believing that Root was new to the diplomatic game and did not realize the magnitude of the task.⁴² Grey of the Foreign Office was not optimistic either, though keenly interested in furthering good Anglo-American relations. As for Lord Elgin in the Colonial Office, he was merely confused. The upshot was that Britain held, a bit longer, to her old policy of inaction in Canadian-American diplomacy.

³⁹ Memorandum of arrangement for special services to be rendered to the State Department by Chandler P. Anderson, 23 December 1905, Anderson Papers, Vol. 20, LC. Anderson served the State Department in the following capacities: Secretary for the Bering Sea Claims Commission, U.S. Secretary for the Joint High Commission 1898-9; Associate Counsel at the Alaska Boundary Tribunal, 1903; Special Counsel for the State Department, 1905-09; and 1909-10; US Agent at The Hague, 1910; US Delegate, Fur Seal Conference, 1911; and Counsellor, 1910-13. He played a vital role in the drafting and negotiating of all the Canadian-American treaties.

⁴⁰ Root to Anderson, 26 January 1909; Bryce to Philander C. Knox, 5 January 1911; and Knox to Anderson, 17 May 1912, Anderson Papers, Vol. 100, LC.

⁴¹ Durand to Earl Grey, 28 February 1906, Grey of Howick Papers, Vol. 6, PAC.

⁴² Sykes, *Durand*, pp. 296-7.

While Britain drifted, Canada struck out on a new course. Laurier was most receptive. He favored "holding out a hand in response," and informed Root that he hoped the latter would draw up a list of those questions he wished to adjust.⁴³ Given this incentive, Root pushed ahead. On 3 May 1906, he set forth his position on specific matters in an informal letter to Durand. In fact, however, it was written for Laurier and intended as a position paper.⁴⁴ When Sir Wilfrid got it, he turned it over to Joseph Pope, Canada's Under-Secretary of State, who spent most of the summer composing an answer. Laurier's ultimate response took the form of a letter (25 September, 1906) from him to Governor General Grey.

Sir Wilfrid wanted to clean the slate and would have done so regardless of who resided in Rideau Hall. With Earl Grey there, 1904-11, the work was accomplished more quickly and easily than it would have been under his predecessor; and the thought of Grey's successor, the Duke of Connaught, playing an effective diplomatic role is incredible. Grey was a vital, working part of the diplomatic machinery that produced the numerous Canadian-American treaties between 1908 and 1912.

Shortly after the earl's arrival in Ottawa, a spokesman for the government pointedly remarked that "Lord Grey will live peacefully here. Rideau Hall will be . . . a place of rest, wherein he may witness the normal though vigorous growth of a nation capable of taking care of itself, but knowing also where to find a protector."⁴⁵ Grey had different ideas. He believed his primary purpose was to facilitate the settlement of Canadian-American differences. He familiarized himself with the various questions and speedily, if ever so discreetly, put on the vestments of Canada's "foreign secretary." Conscious of the feeling that — as one editor put it — his duties as governor general should be "mainly social," Grey gained Laurier's permission to invite guests to Rideau Hall, especially prominent Americans.⁴⁶

The first invitation went to Joseph Choate, ex-American ambassador to Great Britain. Choate passed a very "useful" week in Ottawa. He spoke to the Canadian Club and rang all the changes of good

⁴³ Earl Grey to Elgin, 8 March 1906, Grey of Howick Papers, Vol. 13, PAC.

⁴⁴ Root to Earl Grey, 2 June 1906, Grey of Howick Papers, Vol. 7, PAC. Root's letter to Durand was published as a confidential document of the United States Government, "Negotiations relating to Unsettled Questions with Canada". Copy in Governor-General's Numbered Files, No. 192, Vol. 1(b).

⁴⁵ *Official Report of the Debates of the House of Commons of the Dominion of Canada*, 10th Parliament, 1st Session, 16 January 1905, p. 18.

⁴⁶ *Halifax Morning Chronicle*, 10 December 1904; memorandum of conversation with Laurier, 14 February 1905, Grey of Howick Papers, Vol. 1, PAC.

fellowship.⁴⁷ He conversed at length with Laurier, Pope, and Grey about Canadian-American affairs and worked hard to ease the relations which Alaska had strained. But his most consequential act was to invite Grey, on behalf of the Society of Pilgrims, to visit New York City and address their membership.⁴⁸ The Pilgrims were an elite group of Anglo-Americans whose American branch pursued policies often indistinguishable from the State Department's.⁴⁹

When Grey attended the Pilgrims' Dinner on 31 March 1906, the grand ballroom of the Waldorf-Astoria was crowded with over 400 "mandarins" from the eastern seaboard — financiers, bankers, lawyers, bishops, politicians. The vice president of the Pilgrims introduced Choate, who said many kind things about Canada before introducing Grey. Grey referred to the good will evident in Canadian-American relations and announced that both governments planned to take advantage of it to settle their outstanding differences. Root followed, speaking in much the same vein. He welcomed Grey as governor general of "a great and powerful sister-nation" and promised to deal with the questions which vexed his country and Canada "as a just and kindly man would deal with his neighbor at home." That evening, everyone talked about Canadian-American harmony, the wonders of their Anglo-Saxon heritage, and the glorious destiny awaiting all English-speaking peoples. It was an old fashioned love-feast and it closed with the singing of "Auld Lang Syne."⁵⁰

The whole affair made a strong impression upon Grey. "The iron is malleable," he wrote Laurier excitedly, "& now is the time

⁴⁷ Gerald H. Brown, ed., *Addresses Delivered before the Canadian Club of Ottawa, 1903-1909* (Ottawa, 1910), pp. 21-26.

⁴⁸ Earl Grey to Elgin, 9 March 1906, Grey of Howick Papers, Vol. 13, PAC; *Ottawa Free Press*, 2 February 1906; *Toronto Globe*, 3 February 1906; *Halifax Morning Chronicle*, 2 February 1906. If delighting Canadians was a primary motive behind Choate's visit, he succeeded. Even Joseph Pope found the old gentleman "charming," perhaps because the latter confided "that though a Republican he never cared much for Blaine, or felt much confidence in him." Diary, 6 February 1906, Pope Papers, Vol. 44, PAC.

⁴⁹ The stated purpose of the Pilgrims was "to establish and cement friendly relations" between the people and governments of Great Britain and the United States. Pamphlet entitled "Dinner Given by the Pilgrims of the United States to His Excellency, the Right Honorable Earl Grey," enclosed in Sir Percy Sanderson, British Consul General, to the Foreign Office, 3 April 1906, F.O. 371/158, PRO. Cf. W. B. Duncan to Root, 29 January 1908, Root Papers, Vol. 54, LC. Duncan states that the purpose of the Pilgrims is "to help make easy the work of diplomacy by cultivating those relations between... [the United States and Great Britain] which conduce to that end."

⁵⁰ Duncan to Root, 9 April 1906, Root Papers, Vol. 45, LC; *New York Times*, 1 April 1906, enclosed in Sanderson to the Foreign Office, *op. cit.*; *Ottawa Free Press*, 2 April 1906; *Toronto Globe*, 2 April 1906. For Root's speech, "Canada and the U.S.," see Robert Bacon and James B. Scott, eds., *Miscellaneous Addresses by Elihu Root* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1917), pp. 151-6.

to strike.”⁵¹ From New York, the governor general went straight to Washington, where he passed a pleasant and productive week of diplomacy – a night at the White House, a tour up the Potomac to see Mount Vernon, and long talks with Durand and Root. The results were rewarding. Root repeated how anxious he was to clean the slate.⁵² Both parties agreed to bury the JHC and return to direct negotiations between the secretary and the ambassador, assisted, of course, by the Canadians. And there was one indirect result of the Washington conference: Grey invited Root to visit him during the coming winter.

Root’s “pilgrimage” in January, 1907 was more important to the success of Canadian-American diplomacy than Grey’s visit to the United States. And his was, by far, the harder role to play. The Americans had welcomed the governor general with open arms; Canadians greeted the secretary of state with open skepticism, recalling that he had been one of Roosevelt’s “impartial jurists” and commenting that “somehow it happens that Mr. Root neither brings nor sends any good to British territory.”⁵³ In the House, George Foster warned Canadians not to give up any material advantages in order to receive a few favors from the Americans. In response, Laurier promised that “he would insist on a good quid pro quo for every concession made.”⁵⁴

Grey and Root, working together, eased many of Canada’s apprehensions. As host, Grey skilfully arranged the schedule. On one evening, Root dined alone with Laurier; on another, with the prime minister and three of the strong men in his party, including Root’s old Alaska friends: Allen B. Aylesworth and Sir Clifford Sifton. Grey hoped that Washington and Ottawa would get to know each other; and with all the dinners, luncheons, and informal gatherings, Root got to know Ottawa quite well.⁵⁵ He came away with a sensitive appreciation of the suspicion, even hostility, with which some Canadians viewed the United States. And both he and Laurier gained a greater understanding of the practical, political problems facing each other. He (Root) might have his Senate – and Cabot Lodge,

⁵¹ 3 April 1906, Grey of Howick Papers, Vol. 1, PAC.

⁵² Earl Grey to His Majesty, 4 April 1906, Grey of Howick Papers, Vol. 18, PAC; Earl Grey to Laurier, 4 April 1906, *ibid.*, Vol. 1.

⁵³ *Halifax Herald*, 13 January 1907; Cf. *Toronto Globe*, cited in *Halifax Morning Chronicle*, 17 January 1907; *Toronto Globe*, 18 January 1907; *Halifax Morning Chronicle*, 18 January 1907; *Hamilton Spectator*, 15 January 1907, quoted in *The Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs*, 1907, p. 399.

⁵⁴ *Toronto News*, 18 January 1907.

⁵⁵ Earl Grey to Esme Howard, 24 January 1907, Grey of Howick Papers, Vol. 1, PAC; Grey to Elgin, 24 January 1907, *ibid.*, Vol. 14; Grey to Sir Edward Grey, 28 January 1907, *ibid.*, Vol. 7.

dauntless defender of protectionism and the Gloucester fishermen; but Laurier had his House — and Maritime MPs who wanted to do away with the *modus vivendi*.⁵⁶

The high point of Root's visit occurred when he addressed a large and impressive crowd of Senators, MPs, and members of the Ottawa Valley "establishment" at the Canadian Club.⁵⁷ As an upstate New Yorker, Root said he had been observing Canada for nearly forty years, watching it develop into a "great and vigorous nation." Though there were and always would be differences between Canada and the United States, he stated — with more faith than reason — that most of them had been settled by simple diplomatic devices. And, finally, he referred to the continuous intermingling of people between Canada and the United States and invited his audience to join with him in a sentimental toast which "fairly carried men off their feet."⁵⁸ In retrospect, one editor felt he should remind his readers that Root had been one of "America's "impartial jurists"; "but after . . . [the] happy references to Canada and Canadians in his speech . . . much can be forgiven."⁵⁹

Scarcely had Root returned to Washington when the new British ambassador arrived. This, of course, was James Bryce, the most suitable and distinguished man that Britain had ever sent to these shores. Reminiscing later about Bryce's role in the diplomatic process, Root reminded him that he stepped out of the pages of the *American Commonwealth*, entered the field of diplomacy, and brought about "a new order of things . . . between Canada and the United States."

For you . . . [were] three fourths of the whole. All the other elements were here before you came and nothing was done. You knew all the parties too well to be suspicious and you had too genuine an interest in all of them to wish for anything unfair and you had the confidence of all of them and you were willing to take the trouble to get things done and thought much less of diplomatic formality than of statesmanship. So you reach[ed] results of great and lasting value.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ *Official Report of the Debates of the House of Commons of the Dominion of Canada*, 10th Parliament, 3rd Session, 17 January 1907, pp. 1670-97. A. K. Maclean thought the "modus vivendi" was "a weak and unmanly policy . . . [which] invertebrates a nation."

⁵⁷ "Relations between the United States and Canada," in G. H. Brown, ed., *Addresses Delivered before the Canadian Club of Ottawa, 1903-1909*; *Halifax Herald*, 23 January 1907; *Toronto Globe*, 23 January 1907.

⁵⁸ *Toronto News*, 23 January 1907.

⁵⁹ *Halifax Morning Chronicle*, 23 January 1907.

⁶⁰ Root to Bryce, 30 March 1910, Bryce Papers, USA No. 9, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

Root's estimate is not far off the mark. More than any other man, Bryce brought the Canadian-American negotiations to a successful conclusion.

As ambassador, Bryce's responsibilities resembled Durand's. He was to represent Britain to the United States and the American people and interpret the United States to Britain. He was also to serve as Canada's "ambassador" and expedite the settlement of Canadian-American disputes, always acting in such a way as to serve both Canada and the empire, always aware of the cold fact that Canada was "practically the only quarter" from which Anglo-American quarrels were likely to arise.⁶¹

His first role was easy enough. Bryce knew and liked America, and Americans appreciated and honored him. Unlike the observations of Durand, which had emphasized the crudity rather than the character of the American people, Bryce's reports to the Foreign Office were balanced, accurate, and useful. He got along with Roosevelt, and he and Root "understood each other perfectly."⁶² He got to know the American people by travelling through every state in the union and speaking before countless audiences. His achievements gratified the Foreign Office — and Sir Edward Grey, who found it difficult to express the appreciation of His Majesty's Government for "the tremendous public service . . . [Bryce] rendered in improving our relations with both Canada and the United States."⁶³

Bryce's task in the United States was much easier than it was in Canada, where he and his book were not cherished household words. At first, Canadians simply regarded him as the new British ambassador and a man known to be most sympathetic to the United States. One Canadian newspaper, remarking upon his appointment, insisted that Bryce had made changes in the *American Commonwealth* just to please his American friends.⁶⁴ Another, interviewing him after his arrival in North America, asked if he were going to revise the book "in view of the extension of the United States."⁶⁵ And a third noted that, when news of Bryce's appointment reached Ottawa, some people there claimed that his "nomination was but the prelude to a sacrifice of Canadian interests."⁶⁶

⁶¹ Bryce to Sir Edward Grey, 10 July 1909, Sir Edward Grey Papers, F.O. 800, No. 81, PRO.

⁶² Esme Howard, *Theatre of Life: Life Seen from the Stalls, 1903-1936* (Boston, 1936), p. 139.

⁶³ Sir Edward Grey to Bryce, 11 March 1911, Sir Edward Grey Papers, F.O. 800, No. 82, PRO.

⁶⁴ *Halifax Herald*, 20 December 1906.

⁶⁵ *Toronto News*, 28 March 1907.

⁶⁶ *Ottawa Free Press*, 25 March 1907.

Much depended upon the first of Bryce's pilgrimages to Canada in March, 1907. He spoke before the Canadian Club in Ottawa and Toronto; and on both occasions, he was made aware of Canada's misgivings about British diplomacy. In Ottawa, Laurier introduced him as the new ambassador and needlessly reminded the audience that Bryce's predecessors had given the Americans a lot of Canadian territory, including large slices of Alaska. Laurier also claimed that this was the first time any British ambassador had visited Canada. If another had come, he quipped, his visit must have "been like the flight of a meteor, one moment seen, the next moment gone, and leaving no trace behind."⁶⁷ When Bryce got a chance to defend himself, he replied that he was in Canada "to listen rather than to speak" and to learn firsthand "the wishes, thoughts, and feelings of Canadians." Then he went on to give a prepared talk about Britain's concern for Canada and the other "sister-states" within the empire and about His Majesty's hopes to bring about a closer imperial association based upon "the principles of equality and co-partnership".⁶⁸

Bryce was handled almost as roughly in Toronto, where the lieutenant governor introduced him, observing that Bryce had held a parliamentary seat for twenty-three years. "To do that," said his excellency, "he must be a man of staying properties; a man who believes in the sentiment, 'What I have, that I will hold,' and, gentlemen, that is not a bad sentiment to take with you across the border."⁶⁹ The overflow audience greeted this advice with applause and laughter — in which Bryce joined. When he rose to his feet, he stated, first of all, that he regarded it as "a paramount duty" to insist that "all just claims and rights of Canada shall be secured in every respect." Wild cheers greeted this statement: indeed some of the less inhibited members stood up and waved their handkerchiefs. When the demonstration had ended, Bryce went ahead with his little talk: "Some lessons in modern democracy, as it is in Switzerland."⁷⁰

Bryce's pilgrimages succeeded so well that, in Laurier's judgement, he "revolutionized the embassy, in so far as Canada was concerned."⁷¹ In part, Bryce was successful because he won the trust

⁶⁷ *Toronto News*, 2 April 1907.

⁶⁸ Speech by James Bryce, before the fourth annual banquet of the Canadian Club of Ottawa, 1 April 1907. Brown, ed., *Addresses Delivered before the Canadian Club of Ottawa, 1903-1909*.

⁶⁹ *Toronto News*, 3 April 1907.

⁷⁰ *Ottawa Free Press*, 4 April 1907.

⁷¹ Laurier to Earl Grey, 12 June 1910, Grey of Howick Papers, Vol. 5, PAC.

of Canadians.⁷² He combined magnetic personal appeal with unusual talent for social interaction. He mixed easily with Canadians of all stations and conversed on virtually all subjects. He travelled widely; he spoke everywhere; he listened; and perhaps for the first time in history, Britain's ambassador to the United States was "really able to obtain the confidence of the Canadians . . ." ⁷³

Above all else, Bryce was a highly skilled diplomatist who faithfully and effectively represented Canadian interests. Some of his success could be attributed to his staff, to men such as the ingenious and indefatigable George Young, who did most of Bryce's devilling and was responsible for the *sub rosa* agreement at The Hague in 1910 which brought about the fisheries settlement.⁷⁴ But most of the success was due to Bryce himself. He visited Ottawa regularly, listening to Joseph Pope's eye-opening accounts of Yankee wickedness, conferring with Lord Grey, and consulting with Laurier and interested members of his government.

Despite the seeming efficacy of his pilgrimages, Bryce sometimes found that, after his return to Washington, Laurier and his ministers "put on their spectacles, and began to find difficulties" in draft treaties and the like.⁷⁵ When such delays occurred – and they were frequent – Bryce would write Grey, urging him to spur on the prime minister. Much of the delay was irremediable. Laurier was the mainspring of his government; and – as he himself confessed – some of his slowness was due to a naturally dilatory constitution.⁷⁶ He was also overworked and occasionally ill; and domestic politics – Laurier's chief interest – were always present to complicate diplomatic negotiations.

Yet confusion and inefficiency were also at hand, sometimes working in an incredible manner. In one instance, Laurier objected to a particular section of a draft-treaty. Bryce conveyed the objection to Root, who obligingly changed the draft. Bryce brought the

⁷² "We have lost our hearts to the Bryces," effervesced one Montreal matron, Lady Drummond. "There is such an entire absence of Conceit or Egoism about him, and his eyes look out so kindly and sincerely from under those bushy brows . . ." Quoted in Earl Grey to Bryce, 28 February 1908, Bryce Papers, USA, No. 27, Bodleian Library, Oxford. The ambassador also enchanted other, less impressionable people – men like Allen Aylesworth, Sydney Fisher, George Gibbons, and Joseph Pope.

⁷³ Hardinge to Bryce, 12 May 1908. Quoted in H. A. L. Fisher, *James Bryce* (New York, 1927), 2 vols., II, 36-7.

⁷⁴ Young to Bryce, 2 September [1910] and 30 November 1910, Bryce Papers, USA No. 30, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

⁷⁵ Bryce to Sir Edward Grey, 20 March 1908, Sir Edward Grey Papers, F.O. 800, No. 80, PRO.

⁷⁶ Laurier to Earl Grey, 12 June 1910, Grey of Howick Papers, Vol. 5, PAC.

amended document back up to Ottawa, where it disappeared into the Minister of Justice's office, whence it emerged months later in the form of a minute officially disapproving Root's amendment because it incorporated Laurier's original suggestion!⁷⁷ Fortunately for the country's future, Bryce and Grey collaborated to urge Laurier to adopt Pope's scheme for a department of external affairs. Both men — in a manner often overlooked — then convinced a quizzical home government of Canada's need for such a department.

Near the end of Grey's tour in Canada, Bryce thanked him for expediting a particular treaty. Then he added: "When someone looks over our correspondence a century hence — as I have kept all your letters — he will be entertained at the light they throw on the way business was done in 1907-10."⁷⁸ Looking over the correspondence, the historian would conclude, by the way business was done, that Bryce, Grey, and Pope were serving Canada as ambassador, foreign secretary, and permanent under-secretary.

By stressing Root, Grey, and Bryce, I have not intended to push Laurier off-stage. He backed the slate-cleaning process from the beginning. Though he remained in the background, only unwillingly bringing diplomatic business before Parliament or the people — and then often pretending an ignorance of events which he was influencing — his support of Canadian-American diplomacy was constant and, in some cases, vital. He selected George C. Gibbons and supported him in the authorship of the most significant of all treaties, the Boundary Waters Treaty. He instructed and despatched Joseph Pope to the fur seal conference at Washington in 1911. Pope pried concessions out of all the other countries, although Canada's sealing fleet was little more than a collection of beach-bound bulks and although all the seal rookeries belonged to the other powers.

Yet none of the above could have occurred without Bryce. He broke up the diplomatic log-jam that developed after the initial exchange of letters between Root and Laurier. The latter, with Grey's enthusiastic endorsement, wanted to stick to an old, outworn formula: to offer the United States "free fishing" for "free fish," that is, to grant Americans all the privileges associated with Canada's inshore fisheries, if they would allow the free importation of Canadian fish. Implicit in the formula was the promise that, if the United States agreed, all other questions would be quickly settled. Unfortunately, the formula was impracticable. The United States Senate

⁷⁷ Bryce to Earl Grey, 30 June 1908, Grey of Howick Papers, Vol. 8, PAC.

⁷⁸ 4 June 1910, *ibid.*, Vol. 10.

would not accept it and Root could do nothing about it — facts which Bryce recognized. He convinced Laurier that the free-fish formula was unworkable and then — what was more difficult — persuaded him to adopt the principle of arbitration and, together with Newfoundland, settle the North Atlantic fisheries. Finally, and subtly, he guided Laurier out of the package-deal swamp of concessions and induced him to settle everything on a piecemeal basis.

The results were spectacular — all the treaties to which Bryce referred when he made that final pilgrimage to Ottawa in 1913. By then, nearly all the Canadian-American questions, with few exceptions, had been settled. Though reciprocity intervened in 1911 and awakened Canada's latent anti-Americanism, it had little effect upon diplomacy. Most of the agreements had already been reached; and, ironically, the defeat of Laurier allowed Bryce to work with Borden and put the finishing touches on the fisheries pact.

Certainly it was not possible to say of Bryce's ambassadorship, as one Canadian had remarked of an earlier era: that "Canada . . . [had] been unsparingly operated upon for the good of the empire."⁷⁹ Any disinterested reckoning of diplomatic accounts, must lead to the conclusion that Canada won and/or tied more treaties than she lost during Bryce's term of office. Even that ex-Alaskan jurist, Allen B. Aylesworth, publicly praised the ambassador as his country's "spokesman and champion".⁸⁰ And on the eve of Bryce's departure, another of Laurier's ex-ministers wrote a fond farewell letter, saying how much Bryce would be missed "as the kind friend and advisor who has done so much for us." "You have been," he concluded, "'our ambassador.'"⁸¹

Bryce was more than that. Each of the three pilgrims — Root, Grey, and Bryce — contributed to the cleaning of the slate. Root was the mainspring. He recognized the difficulties, devised the draft treaties to deal with them and made the first overtures. Grey used his office as governor general to bring principals together and forward negotiations. But it was Bryce who brought it all off. He was — as Root described him — "three-fourths of the whole" — the catalyst who combined the diplomatic elements and made the final settlement possible.

⁷⁹ Quoted in Edward Farrer, "Canada and the United States," *The Contemporary Review* (October, 1906), 90, 562 footnote.

⁸⁰ Quoted in "Canada and Anglo-American Relations" (December, 1913), IV, 107.

⁸¹ S. A. Fisher to Bryce, 19 December [1912], Bryce Papers, C.3, Canada, Bodleian Library, Oxford.