

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott
Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen
Weber Freiligrath Frey
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer
Trackl Stevenson Lichtenberg Doyle Gjellerup
Mommsen Thoma Tolstoi Lenz Hambruch Droste-Hülshoff
Dach Thoma von Arnim Hägele Hanrieder Hauptmann Humboldt
Karrillon Reuter Verne Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier
Garschin Defoe Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder
Damaschke Descartes Schopenhauer Bebel Proust
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Dickens Grimm Jerome Rilke George
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy
Storm Casanova Lessing Langbein Gilm Gryphius
Chamberlain Schiller Lafontaine Iffland Sokrates
Brentano Strachwitz Claudius Schilling Kralik Katharina II. von Rußland Bellamy Gerstäcker Raabe Gibbon Tschechow
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Wilde Gleim Vulpius
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Morgenstern Goedicke
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Kleist Mörike Musil
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Kraus
Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus
Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo Moltke
Nestroy Marie de France
Nietzsche Nansen Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht Ringelnatz
Marx Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz
von Ossietzky May vom Stein Lawrence Irving
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**John Lothrop Motley. a memoir —
Volume 2**

Oliver Wendell Holmes

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JOHN LOTHROP MOTLEY.

A MEMOIR

By Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.

Volume II.

XVI.

1860-1866. AEt. 46-52.

RESIDENCE IN ENGLAND. — OUTBREAK OF THE CIVIL WAR. — LETTERS TO THE LONDON "TIMES." — VISIT TO AMERICA. — APPOINTED MINISTER TO AUSTRIA. — LADY HARCOURT'S LETTER. — MISS MOTLEY'S MEMORANDUM.

The winter of 1859-60 was passed chiefly at Oatlands Hotel, Walton-on-Thames. In 1860 Mr. Motley hired the house No. 31 Hertford Street, May Fair, London. He had just published the first two volumes of his "History of the Netherlands," and was ready for the further labors of its continuation, when the threats, followed by the outbreak, of the great civil contention in his native land brought him back from the struggles of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to the conflict of the nineteenth.

His love of country, which had grown upon him so remarkably of late years, would not suffer him to be silent at such a moment. All around him he found ignorance and prejudice. The quarrel was like to be prejudged in default of a champion of the cause which to him was that of Liberty and Justice. He wrote two long letters to the London "Times," in which he attempted to make clear to Englishmen and to Europe the nature and conditions of our complex system of government, the real cause of the strife, and the mighty issues at stake. Nothing could have been more timely, nothing more needed. Mr. William Everett, who was then in England, bears strong testimony to the effect these letters produced. Had Mr. Motley done no other service to his country, this alone would entitle him to honorable remembrance as among the first defenders of the flag, which at that moment had more to fear from what was going on in the cabinet councils of Europe than from all the armed hosts that were gathering against it.

He returned to America in 1861, and soon afterwards was appointed by Mr. Lincoln Minister to Austria. Mr. Burlingame had been previously appointed to the office, but having been objected to

by the Austrian Government for political reasons, the place unexpectedly left vacant was conferred upon Motley, who had no expectation of any diplomatic appointment when he left Europe. For some interesting particulars relating to his residence in Vienna I must refer to the communications addressed to me by his daughter, Lady Harcourt, and her youngest sister, and the letters I received from him while at the Austrian capital. Lady Harcourt writes:—

"He held the post for six years, seeing the civil war fought out and brought to a triumphant conclusion, and enjoying, as I have every reason to believe, the full confidence and esteem of Mr. Lincoln to the last hour of the President's life. In the first dark years the painful interest of the great national drama was so all-absorbing that literary work was entirely put aside, and with his countrymen at home he lived only in the varying fortunes of the day, his profound faith and enthusiasm sustaining him and lifting him above the natural influence of a by no means sanguine temperament. Later, when the tide was turning and success was nearing, he was more able to work. His social relations during the whole period of his mission were of the most agreeable character. The society of Vienna was at that time, and I believe is still, the absolute reverse of that of England, where all claims to distinction are recognized and welcomed. There the old feudal traditions were still in full force, and diplomatic representatives admitted to the court society by right of official position found it to consist exclusively of an aristocracy of birth, sixteen quarterings of nobility being necessary to a right of presentation to the Emperor and Empress. The society thus constituted was distinguished by great charm and grace of manner, the exclusion of all outer elements not only limiting the numbers, but giving the ease of a family party within the charmed circle. On the other hand, larger interests suffered under the rigid exclusion of all occupations except

the army, diplomacy, and court place. The intimacy among the different members of the society was so close that, beyond a courtesy of manner that never failed, the tendency was to resist the approach of any stranger as a 'gene'. A single new face was instantly remarked and commented on in a Vienna saloon to an extent unknown in any other large capital. This peculiarity, however, worked in favor of the old resident. Kindliness of feeling increased with familiarity and grew into something better than acquaintance, and the parting with most sincere and affectionately disposed friends in the end was deeply felt on both sides. Those years were passed in a pleasant house in the Weiden Faubourg, with a large garden at the back, and I do not think that during this time there was one disagreeable incident in his relations to his colleagues, while in several cases the relations, agreeable with all, became those of close friendship. We lived constantly, of course, in diplomatic and Austrian society, and during the latter part of the time particularly his house was as much frequented and the centre of as many dancing and other receptions as any in the place. His official relations with the Foreign Office were courteous and agreeable, the successive Foreign Ministers during his stay being Count Richberg, Count Mensdorff, and Baron Beust. Austria was so far removed from any real contact with our own country that, though the interest in our war may have been languid, they did not pretend to a knowledge which might have inclined them to controversy, while an instinct that we were acting as a constituted government against rebellion rather inclined them to sympathy. I think I may say that as he became known among them his keen patriotism and high sense of honor and truth were fully understood and appreciated, and that what he said always commanded a sympathetic hearing among men with totally different

political ideas, but with chivalrous and loyal instincts to comprehend his own. I shall never forget his account of the terrible day when the news of Mr. Lincoln's death came. By some accident a rumor of it reached him first through a colleague. He went straight to the Foreign Office for news, hoping against hope, was received by Count Mensdorff, who merely came forward and laid his arm about his shoulder with an intense sympathy beyond words."

Miss Motley, the historian's youngest daughter, has added a note to her sister's communication: —

"During his residence in Vienna the most important negotiations which he had to carry on with the Austrian Government were those connected with the Mexican affair. Maximilian at one time applied to his brother the Emperor for assistance, and he promised to accede to his demand. Accordingly a large number of volunteers were equipped and had actually embarked at Trieste, when a dispatch from Seward arrived, instructing the American Minister to give notice to the Austrian Government that if the troops sailed for Mexico he was to leave Vienna at once. My father had to go at once to Count Mensdorff with these instructions, and in spite of the Foreign Minister being annoyed that the United States Government had not sooner intimated that this extreme course would be taken, the interview was quite amicable and the troops were not allowed to sail. We were in Vienna during the war in which Denmark fought alone against Austria and Prussia, and when it was over Bismarck came to Vienna to settle the terms of peace with the Emperor. He dined with us twice during his short stay, and was most delightful and agreeable. When he and my father were together they seemed to live over the youthful days they had spent together as students, and many were the

anecdotes of their boyish frolics which Bismarck related."

XVII.

1861-1863. AEt. 47-49.

LETTERS FROM VIENNA.

Soon after Mr. Motley's arrival in Vienna I received a long letter from him, most of which relates to personal matters, but which contains a few sentences of interest to the general reader as showing his zealous labors, wherever he found himself, in behalf of the great cause then in bloody debate in his own country:

November 14, 1861.

. . . What can I say to you of cis-Atlantic things? I am almost ashamed to be away from home. You know that I had decided to remain, and had sent for my family to come to America, when my present appointment altered my plans. I do what good I can. I think I made some impression on Lord John Russell, with whom I spent two days soon after my arrival in England, and I talked very frankly and as strongly as I could to Palmerston, and I have had long conversations and correspondences with other leading men in England. I have also had an hour's [conversation] with Thouvenel in Paris. I hammered the Northern view into him as soundly as I could. For this year there will be no foreign interference with us. I don't anticipate it at any time, unless we bring it on ourselves by bad management, which I don't expect. Our fate is in our own hands, and Europe is looking on to see which side is strongest,—when it has made the discovery it will back it as also the best and the most moral. Yesterday I had my audience with the Emperor. He received me with much cordiality, and seemed interested in a long account which I gave him of

our affairs. You may suppose I inculcated the Northern views. We spoke in his vernacular, and he asked me afterwards if I was a German. I mention this not from vanity, but because he asked it with earnestness, and as if it had a political significance. Of course I undeceived him. His appearance interested me, and his manner is very pleasing.

I continued to receive long and interesting letters from him at intervals during his residence as Minister at Vienna. Relating as they often did to public matters, about which he had private sources of information, his anxiety that they should not get into print was perfectly natural. As, however, I was at liberty to read his letters to others at my discretion, and as many parts of these letters have an interest as showing how American affairs looked to one who was behind the scenes in Europe, I may venture to give some extracts without fear of violating the spirit of his injunctions, or of giving offence to individuals. The time may come when his extended correspondence can be printed in full with propriety, but it must be in a future year and after it has passed into the hands of a younger generation. Meanwhile these few glimpses at his life and records of his feelings and opinions will help to make the portrait of the man we are studying present itself somewhat more clearly.

LEGATION of THE U. S. A., VIENNA, January 14, 1862.

MY DEAR HOLMES,—I have two letters of yours, November 29 and December 17, to express my thanks for. It is quite true that it is difficult for me to write with the same feeling that inspires you,— that everything around the inkstand within a radius of a thousand miles is full of deepest interest to writer and reader. I don't even intend to try to amuse you with Vienna matters. What is it to you that we had a very pleasant dinner-party last week at Prince Esterhazy's, and another this week at Prince Liechtenstein's, and that to-morrow I am to put on my cocked hat and laced coat to make a visit to her Imperial Majesty, the Empress Mother, and that to-night there is to be the first of the as-

sembly balls, the Vienna Almack's, at which—I shall be allowed to absent myself altogether?

It strikes me that there is likely to be left a fair field for us a few months longer, say till midsummer. The Trent affair I shall not say much about, except to state that I have always been for giving up the prisoners. I was awfully afraid, knowing that the demand had gone forth,—

"Send us your prisoners or you'll hear of it,"

that the answer would have come back in the Hotspur vein—

'And if the Devil come and roar for them,
We will not send them.'

The result would have been most disastrous, for in order to secure a most trifling advantage,—that of keeping Mason and Slidell at Fort Warren a little longer,—we should have turned our backs on all the principles maintained by us when neutral, and should have been obliged to accept a war at an enormous disadvantage. . . .

But I hardly dared to hope that we should have obtained such a victory as we have done. To have disavowed the illegal transaction at once,—before any demand came from England,—to have placed that disavowal on the broad ground of principle which we have always cherished, and thus with a clear conscience, and to our entire honor, to have kept ourselves clear from a war which must have given the Confederacy the invincible alliance of England,—was exactly what our enemies in Europe did not suppose us capable of doing. But we have done it in the handsomest manner, and there is not one liberal heart in this hemisphere that is not rejoiced, nor one hater of us and of our institutions that is not gnashing his teeth with rage.

The letter of ten close pages from which I have quoted these passages is full of confidential information, and contains extracts from letters of leading statesmen. If its date had been 1762, I might feel authorized in disobeying its injunctions of privacy. I must quote one other sentence, as it shows his animus at that time towards a distinguished statesman of whom he was afterwards accused of speaking in very hard terms by an obscure writer whose intent was to harm him. In speaking of the Trent affair, Mr. Motley says: "The English premier has been foiled by our much maligned Secretary of State, of whom, on this occasion at least, one has the right to say, with Sir Henry Wotton,—

'His armor was his honest thought,
And simple truth his utmost skill.'"

"He says at the close of this long letter:

'I wish I could bore you about something else but American politics.

But there is nothing else worth thinking of in the world. All else is leather and prunella. We are living over again the days of the Dutchmen or the seventeenth-century Englishmen.'"

My next letter, of fourteen closely written pages, was of similar character to the last. Motley could think of nothing but the great conflict. He was alive to every report from America, listening too with passionate fears or hopes, as the case might be, to the whispers not yet audible to the world which passed from lip to lip of the statesmen who were watching the course of events from the other side of the Atlantic with the sweet complacency of the looker-on of Lucretius; too often rejoicing in the storm that threatened wreck to institutions and an organization which they felt to be a standing menace to the established order of things in their older communities.

A few extracts from this very long letter will be found to have a special interest from the time at which they were written.

LEGATION OF U. S. A., VIENNA, February 26, 1862.

MY DEAR HOLMES,— . . . I take great pleasure in reading your prophecies, and intend to be just as free in hazarding my own, for, as you say, our mortal life is but a string of guesses at the future, and no one but an idiot would be discouraged at finding himself sometimes far out in his calculations. If I find you signally right in any of your predictions, be sure that I will congratulate and applaud. If you make mistakes, you shall never hear of them again, and I promise to forget them. Let me ask the same indulgence from you in return. This is what makes letter- writing a comfort and journalizing dangerous. . . The ides of March will be upon us before this letter reaches you. We have got to squash the rebellion soon, or be squashed forever as a nation. I don't pretend to judge military plans or the capacities of generals. But, as you suggest, perhaps I can take a more just view of the whole picture of the eventful struggle at this great distance than do those absolutely acting and suffering on the scene. Nor can I resist the desire to prophesy any more than you can do, knowing that I may prove utterly mistaken. I say, then, that one great danger comes from the chance of foreign interference. What will prevent that?

Our utterly defeating the Confederates in some great and conclusive battle; or,

Our possession of the cotton ports and opening them to European trade; or,

A most unequivocal policy of slave emancipation.

Any one of these three conditions would stave off recognition by foreign powers, until we had

ourselves abandoned the attempt to reduce the South to obedience.

The last measure is to my mind the most important. The South has, by going to war with the United States government, thrust into our hands against our will the invincible weapon which constitutional reasons had hitherto forbidden us to employ. At the same time it has given us the power to remedy a great wrong to four millions of the human race, in which we had hitherto been obliged to acquiesce. We are threatened with national annihilation, and defied to use the only means of national preservation. The question is distinctly proposed to us, Shall Slavery die, or the great Republic? It is most astounding to me that there can be two opinions in the free States as to the answer.

If we do fall, we deserve our fate. At the beginning of the contest, constitutional scruples might be respectable. But now we are fighting to subjugate the South; that is, Slavery. We are fighting for nothing else that I know of. We are fighting for the Union. Who wishes to destroy the Union? The slaveholder, nobody else. Are we to spend twelve hundred millions, and raise six hundred thousand soldiers, in order to protect slavery? It really does seem to me too simple for argument. I am anxiously waiting for the coming Columbus who will set this egg of ours on end by smashing in the slavery end. We shall be rolling about in every direction until that is done. I don't know that it is to be done by proclamation. Rather perhaps by facts. . . . Well, I console myself with thinking that the people—the American people, at least—is about as wise collectively as less numerous collections of individuals, and that the people has really declared emancipation, and is only puzzling how to carry it into effect. After all, it seems to be a law of Providence,

that progress should be by a spiral movement; so that when it seems most tortuous, we may perhaps be going ahead. I am firm in the faith that slavery is now wriggling itself to death. With slavery in its pristine vigor, I should think the restored Union neither possible nor desirable. Don't understand me as not taking into account all the strategical considerations against premature governmental utterances on this great subject. But are there any trustworthy friends to the Union among the slaveholders? Should we lose many Kentuckians and Virginians who are now with us, if we boldly confiscated the slaves of all rebels? —and a confiscation of property which has legs and so confiscates itself, at command, is not only a legal, but would prove a very practical measure in time of war. In brief, the time is fast approaching, I think, when 'Thorough' should be written on all our banners. Slavery will never accept a subordinate position. The great Republic and Slavery cannot both survive. We have been defied to mortal combat, and yet we hesitate to strike. These are my poor thoughts on this great subject. Perhaps you will think them crude. I was much struck with what you quote from Mr. Conway, that if emancipation was proclaimed on the Upper Mississippi it would be known to the negroes of Louisiana in advance of the telegraph. And if once the blacks had leave to run, how many whites would have to stay at home to guard their dissolving property?

You have had enough of my maunderings. But before I conclude them, may I ask you to give all our kindest regards to Lowell, and to express our admiration for the Yankee Idyl. I am afraid of using too extravagant language if I say all I think about it. Was there ever anything more stinging, more concentrated, more vigorous, more just? He has condensed into those few pages the essence of

a hundred diplomatic papers and historical disquisitions and Fourth of July orations. I was dining a day or two since with his friend Lytton (Bulwer's son, attache here) and Julian Fane (secretary of the embassy), both great admirers of him,—and especially of the "Biglow Papers;" they begged me to send them the Mason and Slidell Idyl, but I wouldn't,—I don't think it is in English nature (although theirs is very cosmopolitan and liberal) to take such punishment and come up smiling. I would rather they got it in some other way, and then told me what they thought voluntarily.

I have very pleasant relations with all the J. B.'s here. They are all friendly and well disposed to the North,—I speak of the embassy, which, with the ambassador and —dress, numbers eight or ten souls, some of them very intellectual ones. There are no other J. B.'s here. I have no fear at present of foreign interference. We have got three or four months to do our work in,—a fair field and no favor. There is no question whatever that the Southern commissioners have been thoroughly snubbed in London and Paris. There is to be a blockade debate in Parliament next week, but no bad consequences are to be apprehended. The Duke de Gramont (French ambassador, and an intimate friend of the Emperor) told my wife last night that it was entirely false that the Emperor had ever urged the English government to break the blockade. "Don't believe it,—don't believe a word of it," he said. He has always held that language to me. He added that Prince Napoleon had just come out with a strong speech about us,—you will see it, doubtless, before you get this letter,—but it has not yet reached us.

Shall I say anything of Austria,—what can I say that would interest you? That's the reason why I hate to write. All my thoughts are in America. Do